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President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte ..... (Saint Lucia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Zarif (Islamic Republic of Iran), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 160 (*continued*)

Global road safety crisis

Draft resolution (A/58/L.60/Rev.1)

The Acting President: Members will recall that the plenary meeting this morning is held in connection with World Health Day and the launching of the *World report on road traffic injury prevention*, pursuant to resolution 58/9 of 5 November 2003.

Day after day, sombre accounts of death and serious injury resulting from road traffic accidents are reported in countries around the world. Each year, road traffic accidents account for more than 1 million deaths and injure or disable between 20 and 50 million people. A growing crisis such as this, which affects all States Members of the United Nations, now has its proper place on the international agenda. This plenary meeting of the General Assembly on the global road safety crisis provides us with an opportunity to examine the multifaceted issues concerning road safety and, importantly, to focus on the development of effective strategies to address it.

When global road safety was first taken up at its fifty-fifth session, the General Assembly noted the rapid increase in road traffic deaths globally and its impact on national economies, especially in developing countries. Since then, the United Nations has taken steps to bring this matter to the forefront for consideration and action. It is an initiative carried out with the cooperation of the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Bank and other United Nations agencies.

World Health Day, which we celebrated just one week ago, for example, was dedicated to road safety. The theme for the Day, "Road safety is no accident", underscored that road traffic tragedies are indeed avoidable. The recently launched *World report on road traffic injury prevention*, co-produced by the World Health Organization and the World Bank, sets out in detail the core issues surrounding road accidents, including their global impact, risk factors involved and ways to address them.

It is evident that, if trends in the global road traffic crisis continue, it could become a major global health crisis, with significant economic and social consequences. The statistics available to us allow us to make a balanced assessment of the situation as it now stands and of the path it is likely to take in the future if we do not intervene in a decisive and urgent way.

The statistics are startling. According to WHO and World Bank estimates, the global economic costs of road accidents and the injuries that result amount to some $518 billion. Developing countries account for

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some $65 billion of this amount, which is more than they receive in official development assistance.

A majority of motor vehicles are operated in the developed world and it might be expected that a majority of fatalities would occur in the developed world. The statistics, however, paint quite a different picture. Low- and middle-income countries account for about 85 per cent of deaths and a disproportionately high percentage of disability globally.

Around the world, road injuries are among the leading cause of death for people aged 15 to 44, who are in their most productive years. In 2000, road traffic accidents ranked as the ninth leading cause of mortality and morbidity, accounting for 2.8 per cent of all global deaths and disability. Projections of the WHO suggest that if these trends continue, by 2020, road traffic injuries could rank third among causes of disease or injury, ahead of such other health problems as tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS.

The social costs are incalculable. The loss of breadwinners and the long-term care of people disabled in road traffic accidents drive many families into poverty or further into poverty, particularly in the developing world. From this perspective, the potential consequences for sustainable development are clear.

This meeting, therefore, must be a catalyst for our further action and for strengthening international cooperation.

The General Assembly continues to raise awareness among Member States of the need to critically examine the national and international public policy dimensions of global road safety. Our initiatives in this regard must re-emphasize the setting of strict international standards, worldwide cooperation and, in the case of developing countries, capacity-building to implement those standards to the highest level. Addressing the broader issues of accident prevention, including in the development of infrastructure that takes into account both people and vehicles, also merits urgent consideration.

The international community as a whole has been encouraged to be a part of that process: Governments, international organizations, civil society and the private sector. We are asked to make youth in particular the target of our initiatives. I consider the Stakeholder Forum on global road safety that is to take place tomorrow to be a timely initiative, and would like to encourage participation.

The success of some countries in sharply reducing crashes and injuries underscores that accidents and casualties can be prevented. What this shows us is that we can reduce the risk of death and injury if we take a systematic approach to understanding how people, vehicles and the environment interrelate. It also requires a broad approach encompassing areas including emergency health services, education for prevention, legislation and law enforcement.

I believe that Member States are in agreement that we must do more to address the issue of road traffic safety and make it a focus of attention of the United Nations system. Important courses of action have been proposed in the joint World Health Organization-World Bank report. Governments and United Nations agencies need to take more action in this area. We also need to encourage civil society and the private sector to become our partners in these initiatives. We have proposed that the global road safety crisis be viewed from the broadest perspective, from health to law enforcement. Necessary resources should be mobilized to assist developing countries to improve road safety, consistent with the gravity and urgency of the road traffic problems they face.

I believe we are now poised to make a difference, to reduce risk and to save lives. We must take decisive action, and we must take it now.

I now give the floor to the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Fréchette.

The Deputy Secretary-General: This meeting of the General Assembly brings much needed attention to a global crisis that exists right in front of our eyes yet that, with some noble exceptions, has until now been strangely off the radar screen of public policy. 1.2 million men, women and children are killed in traffic accidents every year. Surely, that should be enough to make road safety a leading issue in global public health.

As with so many other public health problems, the poor suffer disproportionately. More than 80 per cent of those 1.2 million deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries. And in those countries, those most at risk of being injured or killed in a crash are

pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists and people who use informal means of public transport.

The human consequences of road crashes are frequently devastating. Survivors and their families must cope with the painful and often long-term consequences of injury, disability and rehabilitation. The cost of care and the loss of a primary breadwinner can drive a family into poverty.

The economic costs are also enormous. Road traffic injuries cost most countries between 1 and 2 per cent of their gross national product: a total of more than $500 billion every year. The cost in the low- and middle-income countries exceeds the amount they receive in development assistance.

It need not be so. People hold a fatalistic view of road crashes, often encouraged by the use of the word "accident" instead of "crash" or "collision". Yet, many of the risks involved are entirely within our control. Many crashes can be prevented, while the effects of many others can be reduced. We have a lot to do to raise awareness. We must ensure that hard-earned gains in public health and development are not undermined by those preventable deaths and injuries.

Yes, we have a lot of work to do. But we know what works, and we have the knowledge at hand to make the necessary changes. This is a multisectoral problem, falling not just within the domain of ministries of transport. Ministries of health, finance, environment, education, justice, police and others all have to work with the transport sector to improve road safety.

We can take heart in the widespread enthusiasm shown by so many organizations and experts throughout the world, teaching and learning about road safety and taking the initiative to make roads safer. The United Nations family, including the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank and others, will continue to play its role.

I call upon Member States and civil society to take concerted action on key issues such as wider dissemination of safety devices, improved design of roads and vehicles and firmer action against speeding and those who drive while their reactions are impaired by alcohol or drugs.

I also call upon the donor community to make additional investment in this area. Current support for road safety in developing countries is insufficient. Such contributions would be cost-effective. Even more important, they would save lives.

Road safety is no accident, as has been said. It requires commitment at the highest levels of leadership. The less we do about it, the more lives will be shattered. I urge the Assembly to adopt a resolution that reflects our unanimous will to improve global road safety. Let us remind ourselves and one another that, working together, we can save lives.

The Acting President: After consultations and with the permission of Member States, I now give the floor to the Director-General of the World Health Organization, in accordance with resolution 58/9 of 5 November 2003.

Mr. Lee (World Health Organization): The first person to be killed by a car was Bridget Driscoll of the United Kingdom. She was 44 years old and a mother of two. She was knocked down at London's Crystal Palace on 17 August 1896. The car was travelling at 12 kilometres per hour. She never knew what hit her. The British coroner recorded a verdict of accidental death. Speaking at the inquest, he warned: "This must never happen again".

Twenty years ago, Michel Zeller was driving to work when his car collided with a truck. He was not killed, but he was in a coma for six months. He attended our World Health Day celebration last week in Geneva, in a wheelchair, as his injuries have left him paralyzed for life. His wife spoke on his behalf, because he has lost the use of his voice. She herself found it very difficult to speak, not because of any injury but because of the trauma of recalling what had happened. Her message was that this must never happen to anyone again. On behalf of her family and the millions of others who are afflicted in the same way every year, I bring the same message to the Assembly today.

I thank the Government of Oman for taking the lead in bringing this topic to the General Assembly today.

The deaths, injuries and economic losses caused by road accidents can be prevented. The *World report on road traffic injury prevention*, which we launched last week in Paris, set out the known risk factors and the prevention measures that are known to be effective. Some of these are to set and enforce laws on seat belts,

child restraints, helmets and drinking and driving, to promote daytime running lights and to improve visibility for all road users. In addition to setting laws and raising awareness, countries need to create policies that promote safer vehicles, safer traffic management and safer road design. The countries that have been most successful in improving safety have been those that have engaged many different groups from Government, civil society and industry in a coordinated road safety programme. Every sector, especially the transport, education, health and law enforcement sectors, has a role to play in tackling the problem.

The public needs to increase its contribution by strengthening emergency services for victims, improving data collection, contributing to policy-making and promoting prevention activities. International agencies, the donor community and non-governmental organizations all have an important role to play in promoting road safety. Each one of us, whether as pedestrians, as drivers or as decision-makers, can contribute to this effort. Road safety is no accident. Traffic injuries decrease wherever people recognize that they can be prevented and act accordingly. Let us all decide here and now to give road safety the priority it deserves.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Yousef Bin Al-Alawi Bin Abdulla, Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs of Oman, to introduce draft resolution A/58/L.60/Rev.1.

Mr. Abdulla (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to express my sincere gratitude to the Secretary-General for his valuable report on the global road safety crisis (A/58/228). The report represents a qualitative breakthrough in our deliberations on this humanitarian crisis, which affects the lives of individuals and communities throughout the world. I would also like to express my appreciation to Mr. Lee Jong-wook, Director-General of the World Health Organization, for his thorough overview of the major themes of the *World report on road traffic injury prevention*.

We congratulate the World Health Organization and the World Bank on the issuance of that important document, with the contributions of more than 100 experts representing all continents and many different sectors. We also wish to commend the friendly Government of France for hosting a conference in Paris on 7 April 2004, which highlighted the consequences of road traffic accidents and means of prevention.

Throughout the history of mankind the individual has been at the centre of development. The success of any development plan depends, to a great extent, on meeting human needs. There may be obstacles that stand in the way of enjoying the fruits of development. However, solutions must be sought. Road traffic accidents and injuries are a major issue and a public health problem of great concern to individuals, families and communities.

On the social front, statistics indicate that nearly 3,000 people perish each day due to road traffic accidents, resulting in more than 1 million deaths every year. Moreover, 20 million to 50 million persons are injured every year, some sustaining life-long disabilities. Studies indicate that if appropriate action is not urgently taken to remedy this problem, it is likely that road traffic injuries could become the third largest cause of death in developing countries by 2020.

On the economic front, road traffic injuries have negative consequences for the economies of the world. Statistics show that roughly $518 billion is spent annually on road traffic injuries, injuries that affect the most productive groups. The least developed and other developing countries account for about 85 per cent of these accidents, which in turn further burdens their already overburdened economies. Aware of this unfolding crisis, we believe that no effort should be spared in enhancing and supporting programmes aimed at improving safety for all road users and sparing them the scourge of this humanitarian crisis.

Allow me, in this context, to point to the steps implemented by my Government at the national level since 1997. They include, inter alia, the enactment of legislation, the establishment of a national road safety agency, updating comprehensive regulations to meet the needs of the injured and their rehabilitation and the creation of a registry to obtain detailed information on the consequences of injuries, with the aim of minimizing the crisis and with the ultimate goal of creating for our citizens an environment that is conducive to achieving further social and economic development.

We believe that our deliberations on road safety should go beyond the ceremonial, and that serious and immediate steps should be taken at the national, regional and global levels. This requires strong

political will and concerted, sustained efforts across a broad range of sectors, from road users to Governments and car manufacturers, as well as regional and international organizations, which must work together to identify sound measures and criteria to counter this unfolding crisis.

Oman's initiative to raise global awareness about road safety, through General Assembly resolution 58/9, which called, inter alia, for a worldwide effort to raise awareness of the road safety crisis and its consequences, was based on that premise. The resolution also emphasized the need to put in place mechanisms to improve safety for road users through reducing the negative impact of road accidents.

In that context, I am pleased to present draft resolution A/58/L.60/Rev.1, on which my Government held numerous consultations with other Member States to arrive at a consensus reflecting the ambitions of our countries and the expectations of our peoples. The draft resolution builds on the practical recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report and in the *World report on road traffic injury prevention* of the World Health Organization and the World Bank. The main points of the draft resolution before the Assembly, which we hope will be adopted without a vote, are as follows.

First, it invites the World Health Organization, working in close cooperation with the United Nations regional commissions, to act as a coordinator on road safety issues within the United Nations system.

Secondly, it requests the Secretary-General, in submitting his report to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session, in accordance with resolution 58/9, to draw upon the expertise of the United Nations regional commissions, as well as the World Health Organization and the World Bank, on road safety.

Thirdly, it underlines the need for further strengthening international cooperation, taking into account the needs of developing countries by enhancing their financial and institutional capacities, to deal with issues of road safety.

The sponsors of the draft resolution are Afghanistan, Algeria, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, China, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, Guatemala, Guyana, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Ireland, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Moldova, Monaco, Morocco, Pakistan, Panama, the Republic of Korea, Romania, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Slovenia, South Africa, the Sudan, Switzerland, the Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen and Zambia.

The responsibilities and challenges ahead are great and require strong political will within the framework of effective global participation between member States, regional and international organizations and civil society. That partnership should include initiatives, programmes and the exchange of expertise on road safety issues, in addition to the promulgation of legislation at a level commensurate with our goals and aspirations to reduce road traffic injuries for succeeding generations.

In conclusion, we are facing a critical crisis and further cooperation is crucial through the active involvement of the United Nations, its specialized agencies and civil society for a safer and more stable environment for all people.

The Acting President: I call on the Minister for Transport of Ireland, Mr. Seamus Brennan, who will speak on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. Brennan (Ireland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. Furthermore, the following countries also align themselves with this statement: the 10 acceding countries which will become members of the European Union at a special ceremony in Dublin on 1 May 2004 — Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia; the candidate countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey; the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro; and the European Free Trade Association countries, Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area.

Today's debate comes at the end of a week in which we have all been asked by the United Nations and the World Health Organization (WHO) to place a particular emphasis on road safety. Traffic collisions are at epidemic levels in many States and there seems to be widespread acceptance that they are an inevitable consequence of ever-increasing mobility. That view

feeds on and encourages the type of behaviour that creates the environment that gives rise to such collisions in the first place. Challenging that behaviour and the premise on which it is based requires the advocacy of champions. Bringing the subject of road safety to this plenary today reflects the vision and commitment of Minister Bin Al-Alawi Bin Abdulla of Oman that societies around the world must address both the causes and the results of traffic collisions.

Against the background — as we have heard already today — of 1.2 million deaths and 50 million injuries on our roads, the launch in Paris last week of the *World report on road traffic injury prevention* by the World Health Organization and the World Bank presents a timely commentary on road safety in its broadest sense. The *report* presents an overview of road safety on a global basis, emphasizing the scope of the problem and discussing policies aimed at the prevention of collisions and the reduction of their effects.

The consequences of our acceptance of the inevitability of traffic collisions have been clearly established in very stark terms by the WHO. Failure to act could see injuries from road traffic placed as the third highest contributor to the global burden of disease and injury by 2020.

However, many societies and Governments have chosen to face this challenge. Indeed, mentalities, I believe, are changing as regards road safety. Road accident fatalities are no longer accepted as an inevitable corollary of increased mobility. On the contrary, the continuous reduction of road accident levels is now considered a challenge — a challenge which indeed warrants considerable efforts.

For example, in Australia and Canada, great progress has been made. Similarly, in Europe we can look to the successes of countries like Sweden, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Against the background of rising vehicle populations and increases in driver numbers, these States have actually recorded dramatic reductions in road casualty levels. In parallel to these success stories, other European countries have also achieved considerable improvements. It is important to underline that these successes are generally based on the adoption of wide-ranging planned approaches to road safety policy with ambitious targets, where all of the actors are engaged in the delivery of a strategic approach. Over the past number of years, such an approach has seen road deaths in my own country, Ireland, fall dramatically.

It was also appropriate that the efforts undertaken at the national level should be mirrored and complemented at the level of the European Union. In fact, the European Union has recognized that there is scope for greater advances if all of the member States are prepared to share not just a vision for the future, but also the best practices that have delivered such progress at the national level in the past. Referring to recent developments in this regard, let me highlight the European Road Safety Action Programme, which was presented by the European Commission in June 2003. It has at its centre the goal of the realization of a reduction of 50 per cent in the number of people killed in traffic collisions by 2010 as compared to 2001. In the current European Union of 15 member States, there are 1.3 million accidents annually, causing 40,000 deaths and 1.7 million injuries, with an estimated economic cost of 2 per cent of the gross domestic product of the European Union. Our aim therefore translates into 20,000 fewer deaths per year.

The European Parliament and the Council of European Ministers of Transport have on many occasions subscribed explicitly to this goal. In doing so, they have placed road safety very high on the political agenda; it will remain there and requires a constant effort.

The Programme identifies, as the main causes of collisions and as major contributing factors to their effects, excessive speed, drinking and driving and the non-use of protective measures, such as seat belts and motorcycle helmets. For this reason, it underlines the urgent need for stricter enforcement of existing legislation in that respect. Furthermore, the Action Programme provides European States with an overview of the relevant information and the actions — legislative and otherwise — which are required in order to achieve the goal of a 50 per cent reduction of road accident fatalities. It also describes structures through which we can better address these issues and provides the information required to replicate the performance of those States that have taken the lead in road safety policy.

The Programme I speak about also places great emphasis on the absolute need to engage civil society in the delivery of better road safety. To that effect, it encourages actors in the public and private sectors to

sign a Road Safety Charter, in which those actors should list their individual aims and actions concerning road safety. I had the privilege of hosting a ceremony in Dublin last week, where, in the presence of the Ministers of Transport of the European Union, the Charter was signed by some 39 organizations and companies, each of which made specific, measurable commitments to improving road safety.

The European Union Action Programme also places great emphasis on the need for the gathering of collision data and information relating to the collision prevention programmes deployed in each of the member States. That will be achieved through the establishment of the European Road Safety Observatory, which will disseminate information on best practices in addressing road safety challenges.

Of course, it is clear to all that we should exchange best practices across all nations worldwide, not just within the European Union. We can all learn from the relevant experience of other nations in this context. To meet this challenge, the draft resolution proposed for adoption at this plenary meeting promotes the concept of the designation of one organization through which the concept of the sharing of information and experience can be promoted on a worldwide basis.

The success of road safety programmes in many countries over the past years and, indeed, decades bears testimony to the possibilities that exist for addressing what has become one of the greatest threats to global health. Replicating that success through the promotion of such programmes worldwide is a challenge for all — and an opportunity. I urge all to take up this challenge and to drastically reduce the number of our people that needlessly lose their lives on roads every day of every year.

Mr. Mineta (United States of America): It is a great honour to have this opportunity to represent my country today as the General Assembly turns its attention to the critical issue of road traffic safety. This is an issue about which my country cares deeply and passionately. I would like to commend the Sultanate of Oman for its leadership in bringing this issue to the forefront of the international agenda, because road traffic safety is, indeed, a global problem. We have heard this morning from the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Louise Fréchette, and the Director-General of the World Health Organization, Mr. Lee Jong-wook, about the magnitude of the challenge that we face.

More than 1 million human beings lose their lives every year because of traffic crashes. That is 1 million mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, husbands and wives who do not make it home. Adding to the tragedy is the fact that so many of those deaths are preventable.

The costs are tremendous in terms of human lives and pain and suffering, as well as in terms of economic costs and the lost opportunities. The United Nations estimates that the economic cost of road traffic injuries is $518 billion per year. Imagine the additional pain and suffering that could be alleviated if our nations could instead invest those lost monies in education, health care, economic development, transportation and other pressing needs.

If we do nothing, however, even more people will die needlessly. The World Health Organization projects that by the year 2020 traffic crashes will rank third among all contributors to the global burden of disease — ahead of malaria, ahead of tuberculosis and ahead of HIV/AIDS.

But my message to the Assembly today is that we need not accept morbidity as the price of mobility — anywhere in the world. Experience has shown that the increased freedom and productivity that transportation brings do not have to come at the price of the safety of our citizens. In the mid-1960s, the United States began focused efforts to make road travel safer. At that time, our country had a death rate of 5.5 fatalities for every 100 million vehicle miles travelled. Since then, much has changed. The United States population has grown substantially, and the number of both cars and drivers on our roads has increased tremendously. Yet, during that same period, we were able to cut the death rate by 72 per cent, to 1.5 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles travelled. That is a truly astonishing accomplishment over a relatively short period of time.

But we know that we can do better. We must do better. 43,000 deaths a year in the United States is unacceptable. That is why President George W. Bush's Administration has established the goal of further reducing the traffic death rate by a third by 2008, to one death per 100 million vehicle miles travelled.

I take particular pride in our country's record when it comes to protecting our most vulnerable citizens: our children. In a single generation, the

United States has dramatically reduced the number of child fatalities in traffic crashes. Today, that number is at a historic low. The approach that we used to help protect our children is illustrative of our traffic safety strategy. In 1966, we established within the national Government one single agency focused on road traffic safety, and we gave it authority to act and a dedicated funding source to get the job done. The agency began collecting reliable data on how safe our children were when riding in motor vehicles. We soon learned a very important fact: more children were killed in highway crashes than by any disease.

Using the data, we were able to develop a comprehensive approach to reducing child fatalities. Our engineers designed cars to better absorb impact and to protect children in the event of a crash. They designed car seats, and we educated parents on the importance of using them to keep their children safe, instead of allowing them to ride on a lap, or on the floor, or in the back of a truck. We established standards for vehicle and child seat manufacturers, and our legislators passed child passenger safety laws to ensure that this very vulnerable segment of our society was protected. And finally, our traffic safety agency has been working for 30 years to improve emergency medical services and trauma systems so that crash victims are properly cared for after a crash.

We recognize that the nature of road safety problems differs from country to country, and so too must our solutions. Still, there is much we can learn from one another. It is my sincere hope that today's meeting will mark the beginning of a broad-based and ongoing international collaboration focused on all aspects of road traffic safety: the behaviour of drivers, passengers and pedestrians; vehicle safety; and the roadway environment.

I am here today to declare that the United States stands ready to share its experience and expertise with the global community and itself to learn from other nations as we work together to prevent roadway deaths and injuries. We will continue to work within the United Nations, particularly within Working Parties 1 and 29 of the Economic Commission for Europe, to exchange information on best practices and to develop recommendations for a comprehensive road injury prevention strategy addressing vehicle, human behaviour and infrastructure aspects.

In a message to the international community on World Health Day 2004, our President, George W. Bush, expressed America's strong commitment "to traffic safety and to the goal of saving more lives throughout the world".

The time for action is now. Providence has given us an opportunity to change history. No other public health crisis is so clearly curable. No other cause of death is so clearly preventable, if only the world's leaders join together to educate each other and our citizens about how to stop the needless deaths on our roads.

That is the job before all of us. If we stand resolved to do our jobs, millions in our global family will be spared pain and heartache, and that is a goal worthy of all of our efforts.

Mr. Tussumo (Kazakhstan) (*spoke in Russian*): First I wish to thank the President for having convened this meeting of the General Assembly devoted to the question of the global crisis in road traffic accidents. The relevance and timeliness of this endeavour is beyond question, bearing in mind the fact that traffic accidents are becoming a prime cause of human death. According to forecasts by the World Health Organization (WHO), by the year 2020 road accident injuries could become a more serious threat than malaria, tuberculosis and AIDS. Of special concern is the fact that, increasingly, the victims of road traffic accidents are young people.

Analysis of the situation shows that road accidents have a physical and psychological impact not only on the victims, but also on their families. They have a negative social and economic impact, particularly on health, and are draining resources from economic and social objectives. Bearing in mind the scope of the crisis, we feel that efforts must be made by the United Nations and its specialized agencies and programmes to develop a comprehensive policy in the area of road traffic safety. We fully share the view that United Nations agencies could include road traffic safety in their strategies in such areas as sustainable development, the environment, gender issues and policies related to the interests of children, women and the elderly.

We also feel that road traffic safety should be the focal point of attention of countries whose roads are part of international transit corridors. The Almaty Programme of Action to expand cooperation among

landlocked and transit developing countries emphasized particularly that the main problems of road safety are the absence of unified technical standards and poor technical servicing. Given the extreme urgency of the problem, Kazakhstan considers draft resolution A/58/L.60/Rev.1, submitted by Oman, as enhancing security for road traffic throughout the world, with special emphasis on the need to strengthen international cooperation in order to bolster the measures taken by developing countries and countries in transition in particular to build their capacity to provide for road safety. It is very important that a coordinating role within the context of the United Nations on issues of road traffic safety be given to WHO, whose work will be supported by the United Nations regional commissions.

Kazakhstan is the centre of the Euro-Asian continent. The overall length of our roads is more than 100,000 kilometres, 13,000 of which are of international importance. Roughly 15 million people live in the territory of Kazakhstan, using more than 1.4 million cars. The Government of Kazakhstan gives priority attention to road safety matters. Legislation in the area of traffic safety in the Republic is nearly complete. The basic provisions of the State system have been enshrined in our law on road traffic safety, which governs the legal norms for ensuring road traffic safety.

The law establishes the legal norms regulating road safety issues. It lays down the principle of prioritizing the lives and health of citizens over the economic imperatives of business activities, as well as State responsibility for ensuring road safety. It also sets out the authorities of government and State organs and establishes the responsibilities of participants in road safety management whose activities are linked to transport and traffic organizations.

Three State programmes regulating traffic and road safety have been established and integrated since we achieved independence. We also have established two advisory bodies whose work it is to prepare strategic proposals in this area. We are a party to the United Nations Convention on Road Traffic and to other conventions in this area.

We wish to point out in particular that the way in which we manage traffic and traffic safety conforms to international requirements and that large towns in Kazakhstan have automated traffic control systems. Here, we make use of the latest technologies. In connection with national legislation, our Ministry of the Interior is addressing the issue of road traffic safety and is administering a uniform State policy.

On 7 April we observed the traditional celebration of World Health Day. This year we will address the problem of injuries resulting from road traffic accidents. Kazakhstan fully supports the Secretary-General's appeal for international cooperation and unity in this global campaign.

Mrs. Gonzalez (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am pleased to be here on behalf of my country to speak about a subject that is of such sensitivity in today's world. Roads are the constant scene of death, and this is something we are all obliged to correct. Costa Rica has demonstrated its firm political commitment to addressing the issue of road safety. This is reflected in our national road safety programme, through which we have proposed to tackle the issue by means of measures in six areas: infrastructure, traffic police, the education system, driver licensing procedures, strengthening legislation, and related information campaigns.

On infrastructure, we have identified projects in our country that have ignored road safety or have been devoid of road safety content: it had been our habit to build roads without introducing the necessary road safety criteria into their design. In Costa Rica, this is now changing.

Secondly, over the past two years we have completely changed the role of the traffic police, who used to engage in passive supervision and who reacted only after an accident had taken place; we are ensuring that they begin to carry out more active supervision. I believe that our police now understand that they have a primary role to play in accident prevention.

Thirdly, President Pacheco has signed a degree introducing road safety education into curriculums from kindergarten to college.

Specifically with regard to the courses that must be taken to obtain a driving license, we are modifying both the theoretical and practical tests.

On information campaigns, let me highlight the seat-belt campaign my country launched a mere six months ago under the motto "For love's sake, use your belt", with the support of the International Automobile Federation. We were surprised to find that only six

months on, our legislators have adopted a law making seat-belt use mandatory in Costa Rica.

Costa Rica is pleased to be a sponsor of draft resolution A/58/L.60/Rev.1, introduced by Oman, precisely because we believe these to be key elements in preventing continued deaths on our roads. Costa Rica believes that all the actions that have been proposed, and which I have just outlined, have enabled us in just one year to prevent 50 deaths compared with the previous year. We have thus achieved a one-point reduction in death rate per 1,000 inhabitants since beginning our national road safety programme about two years ago. We firmly believe that this battle is worth the effort; we can win only by making it a priority both for government and for civil society.

Mr. Zhang Yishan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): In observance of this year's World Health Day, the World Health Organization and the World Bank launched the *World report on road traffic injury prevention*. The Chinese delegation takes this opportunity to convey its heartfelt thanks to the World Health Organization, the World Bank and experts from a number of countries for preparing that report. We believe that the report's recommendations for improvements will be very useful to all Governments in further improving road safety.

The present situation with respect to global road safety is most grave. Worldwide, an estimated 1.2 million people are killed in road accidents each year and another 50 million are injured or disabled. The result is a direct economic loss in excess of $500 billion. It is projected that by 2020 traffic deaths will reach 2.34 million a year, making them the third largest factor in the overall burden of disease and injury — well ahead of AIDS, tuberculosis and lower respiratory infections. It is worth noting that 90 per cent of traffic-accident injuries occur in low- and middle-income countries, a trend that continues.

Those facts demonstrate that traffic injuries are an increasingly serious public health hazard. Without immediate effective preventive action, traffic injuries will have even more serious economic and social consequences for all countries, especially the vast number of developing countries.

As the *World report on road traffic injury prevention* points out, "Road safety is no accident". Traffic injuries can be controlled and prevented through rational analysis and appropriate measures. All Governments bear primary responsibility in that regard; at the same time, the business, health, education and media sectors and non-governmental organizations must pool their efforts. We support close cooperation among the General Assembly, the regional economic and social commissions, the World Health Organization and the World Bank with a view to increasing the attention devoted to this problem. It is our belief that, with the concerted efforts of the international community, the goal of reducing global road traffic injuries can definitely be achieved.

China is a developing country with a population of 1.3 billion. It faces a grave road safety situation. In the period 2001 to 2003 China's traffic death toll exceeded 100,000 per year, with annual injuries averaging more than 500,000 and with economic losses of some 3 billion yuan renminbi: more than $300 million. The major causes of traffic injuries are the lack of safety awareness among drivers, poor road conditions and traffic environment, and inadequate management standards.

The Chinese Government attaches great importance to its work on road safety. President Hu Jintao and Prime Minister Wen Jiabao have repeatedly issued key directives with regard to firmly reversing the trend towards increasing numbers of road accidents. The State Council has made clear that a goal of the Government is to significantly reduce injuries from traffic accidents from the present high rate, to get them under control and to effect a gradual decline.

In order to achieve that goal, last year the State Council established an inter-ministerial joint conference mechanism for road traffic safety, with the Ministry of Public Security as the lead agency and with the participation of 15 governmental departments to coordinate and plan road traffic safety activities. In October 2003, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of China adopted a road traffic safety act, the primary aim of which is to protect the safety of people. Taking into full consideration the many risk factors of road traffic, that law codifies the various preventive legal measures, including in particular clear provisions for the safety of vulnerable road users, such as pedestrians. The law will enter into force on 1 May. We are sure that it will play an important role in improving road traffic safety and in preventing traffic injuries in China.

Mr. Kiryanov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Road traffic injuries continue to be among the most urgent socio-economic problems facing the world community. The Secretary-General's report "Global road safety crisis" and the report of the World Health Organization (WHO) fully illustrate the urgency of the problem and lay out a strategy for the inclusion of all countries of the world in a solution to the crisis.

Among one of the most important areas of strategy development is the participation of State structures — above all, the Governments of our countries — in developing and implementing national road safety programmes, with the support of State financing. Naturally, these programmes must take into account the experience of Governments in addressing road traffic injuries.

The Russian Federation fully shares the concern of the United Nations with regard to the global crisis in road traffic safety, as reflected in the resolutions adopted on 22 May and 5 November 2003. Unfortunately, the situation with respect to road traffic safety in the Russian Federation remains highly unfavourable. In 2003, there were 204,267 accidents on Russian roads, in which 35,600 people died and more than 244,000 were injured. Moreover, an increase in road traffic injury indicators has been observed four years in a row. Since 2002, the number of accidents has increased by 10.8 per cent, the number of deaths by 7 per cent and the number of injuries by 12.7 per cent.

As in the past, a major role in traffic injuries is played by the human factor, in particular by aggressive driving. As members know, this problem was addressed during the Fourth Road Safety Week, observed in the countries of Europe on the initiative of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe from 5 to 11 April, and the special seminar that was held in Geneva within the framework of the Week.

The illegal aggressive behaviour of drivers is the primary cause of the high rate of accidents. In the Russian Federation, almost 80 per cent of road traffic accidents are connected with driver violations of traffic rules. The most common violations causing accidents are, inter alia, drunk driving, speeding and driving on the wrong side of the road. We fully understand the tragic nature of the situation and feel that a solution to the crisis lies in a comprehensive approach to the problem of road accidents, including by improving road traffic safety legislation and by implementing the relevant international norms.

The Russian Federation is currently working on improving and strengthening legal accountability for flagrant traffic violations, the main cause of road accidents incurring death and injury. My country is actively seeking the most effective measures to ensure the maximum possible reduction of social and economic losses from accidents. At the federal and regional levels, we are developing a number of measures, including the organization of passenger transportation, especially that involving children; the prevention of traffic injury for children of school and pre-school age; the improvement of construction and operational safety in transportation and of traffic organization in towns; and other important steps. Special attention is being given to the infrastructure necessary to ensuring pedestrian safety. Bearing in mind the importance of that problem, a number of measures are being taken in towns and developed areas to separate pedestrian and traffic movement.

Among the activities aimed at improving basic road traffic safety, the Council of Federation of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation plans to hold parliamentary hearings in June on the subject of optimizing the legal basis for ensuring road traffic safety in our country. The positive results achieved in that area include several changes and additions to the legal norms governing road traffic, above all the traffic regulations of the Russian Federation. Those norms are based on the relevant international conventions and agreements and on the recommendations elaborated by the Economic Commission for Europe Inland Transport Committee and its Working Party on Road Traffic Safety.

We would also note that an important stage has been reached with respect to the improvement of international legal road traffic safety norms with the elaboration of a substantial package of amendments to the 1968 Vienna Conventions on Road Traffic and on Road Signs and Signals, as well as to the 1971 European Agreements supplementing the Conventions. This work has been done by the Working Party on Road Traffic Safety, with the participation of a delegation from the Russian Federation. A new system of regulations and traffic signs is being developed for tunnel safety and we shall be introducing a new model national driving test that will considerably facilitate international traffic. In our opinion, one of the most

important innovations of the amendments is the reduction in the acceptable level of blood alcohol from 0.8 to 0.5 mg/ml. In the near future, the Russian Federation will address a confirmed package of amendments to the Secretary-General.

In conclusion, I highly commend the work of the Working Party on Road Traffic Safety of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, which could fully assume the function of a global forum on road traffic and ensure that the draft resolution to be adopted at this meeting, of which we are a sponsor, will be a further step towards solving a worldwide problem of modern civilization affecting the lives and health of those who travel by road.

Ms. Al-Mulla (Kuwait): I am glad, Mr. President, that you are here and not on the road.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

My delegation extends its gratitude to the delegation of the Sultanate of Oman for its effective and special efforts to address the problem of road safety, a global issue with a negative impact, and a cause of real suffering.

The United Nations system should coordinate international efforts to limit the impact of road accidents. That is in full accordance with the noble objectives for which the Organization was established. We hope that the Assembly will adopt the draft resolution presented earlier by Mr. Yousef Bin Al-Alawi Bin Abdulla, Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman.

My delegation became aware of this agenda item when it was introduced at the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. We have heard all the horrific statistics published on the negative impact of road accidents, in particular that approximately 1.26 million people worldwide were killed in such accidents in 2000. The number of deaths from injuries of all kinds is expected to rise to 8.4 million by 2020. We have learned that road accidents are the third largest cause of death worldwide.

Like all our brother States of the Gulf Cooperation Council, we suffer from the negative effects of road accidents. The latest official statistics, published in the context of World Health Day, show that in Kuwait, road traffic accidents reached 36,000 in 2002, causing approximately 315 deaths. In 2003, there were 45,000 road accidents, causing 372 deaths, mostly of men between 21 and 40, which are the most productive years for men in any society. This situation demands that the Government and society work tirelessly to prevent road accidents. One must take into account the fact that Kuwait's population does not exceed 1 million.

At the regional level, road accidents in the Gulf States are the leading cause of death: there is one death every two days as a result of road accidents. Kuwait and its brother countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council attach all due importance to this issue, as reflected in the periodic meetings among traffic officials of those States to coordinate their approach to reducing the number of road accidents. Road safety week, the so-called Traffic Week, is held simultaneously in all the Gulf States; there are Traffic Week seminars and public awareness and education campaigns on the need for safety measures and enforceable legislation to reduce traffic accidents, which, as I said, are the leading cause of death in our countries.

We have also held a series of meetings and seminars on this subject. In particular, I refer to the first seminar on road traffic safety, held in Muscat in 1992, and the recent Qatar meeting devoted to road accidents, in which more than 1,600 researchers and specialists from all sectors participated.

We shall continue our international and regional efforts to create an awareness and world interest network in order to mitigate the effects of road accidents on people's lives, especially because this crisis is caused mainly by human beings. We must find a solution and prevent the incidents that cause death and disability.

Kuwait believes that these statistics are more than mere numbers. They should motivate us to attach great importance to this issue at the international level — the same degree of importance that we attach to other deadly phenomena, such as war, epidemics and malaria, AIDS and other diseases. This is all the more true because the social and economic consequences of road accidents — which leave people dead or handicapped — on poor societies and developing countries, particularly in South and East Asia, are very clear. Statistics indicate that the annual cost of road accidents is approximately $580 billion. Thus, it is urgent that international assistance and cooperation be

extended to the developing countries that are most affected.

In that connection, we stress the need to develop international plans and programmes to prevent such accidents. Such programmes must take into account the financial situation of developing countries so that they do not become an additional burden on those countries. They must also take into account differences among the various legislative systems of States.

To that end, Kuwait welcomes the efforts of the World Health Organization (WHO) in this area, which have aimed to highlight the issue and which made road safety the main theme of World Health Day on 7 April 2004. We also pay tribute to the joint initiative of the French Government and WHO which led to the convening of an international conference on road safety and accident prevention, held in Paris on 7 April. My country will study the recommendations contained in the *World report* issued at that conference.

Mr. Gopinathan (India): We thank the Acting President and the Deputy Secretary-General for their introductory remarks. We also commend the World Health Organization for its contribution to this debate, including through the *World report on road traffic injury prevention*. We express our appreciation to the delegation of Oman for its steadfastness of purpose in inscribing this item on the agenda of the General Assembly and in highlighting it.

We in India attach importance to addressing the problem of road traffic safety and to reducing the adverse consequences of traffic accidents. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has been entrusted with responsibility for formulating road safety policies. The Ministry compiles data on road accidents and prepares annual road safety plans.

Various initiatives being implemented include publicity campaigns, grants-in-aid to non-governmental organizations for organizing road safety programmes and creating awareness, a national highway accident relief service scheme, refresher training for heavy vehicle drivers and the setting up of model driving training schools. Publicity programmes include the printing of calendars and the broadcasting of advertisements on radio, television and other mass media. A road safety week is organized every year to raise awareness. Last year, 22,000 drivers of heavy vehicles in the unorganized sector were provided refresher training through non-governmental organizations and local institutions. Awards have been instituted at various levels to recognize important contributions made to road safety.

The linkage between poverty and underdevelopment on the one hand and road safety on the other has been brought out very clearly in the report of the Secretary-General (A/58/228), as well as in the report co-published by the World Health Organization (WHO), which was released on 7 April. Factors such as driver fatigue, old and unsafe vehicle design, unclear marking of intersections and unsatisfactory driver training are some of the more important contributory factors to road accidents. The Secretary-General's report points out that a number of strategies and policies have contributed to dramatic decreases in road crashes in developed countries. It goes on to say, very correctly, that those strategies cannot simply be transferred to, or replicated by, developing countries in a purely mechanical way.

Given this scenario, the imperative, in our view, for increasing international cooperation to assist the developing countries to effectively address issues of road safety cannot be overemphasized. We appreciate the efforts being made in this regard through the World Health Organization. We would also like to acknowledge the work done by the regional commissions of the United Nations, particularly the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). ESCAP has, along with a number of other initiatives, developed an aggregated and computerized Asia-Pacific road accident database. That database, together with its user-friendly software, is aimed at improving road safety by providing a tool to administrators and policy makers to analyse the safety situation in comparison with that of other countries. The software also assists in the development of appropriate strategies and realistic targets and in the monitoring of the effectiveness of national road safety action plans. We are happy that India proposed that initiative for the work programme of the very first session of the ESCAP Committee on Transport, Communications, Tourism and Infrastructure Development. We are collaborating with ESCAP on a pilot project in India for the development of a national road accident database. This project is being funded by the Government of India.

Despite the initiatives already under way, there is scope for further international cooperation. Such cooperation needs, in our view, to extend beyond the

development of international instruments or the universalization of standards that may have been developed in one region. We are happy that draft resolution A/58/L.60/Rev.1, which we will be adopting today and which we feel privileged to have sponsored, recognizes the importance of supporting the efforts of developing countries to build capacities in the field of road safety and of providing financial and technical support for their efforts. We look forward to the effective fulfilment of that commitment.

Mrs. Laohaphan (Thailand): I should like to begin by adding my voice to those of representatives who have spoken before me in expressing our appreciation to you, Sir, to the Secretary-General and to the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) for sharing your thoughts and visions on the issues of global road safety. I wish to commend the Government of France, the World Health Organization and the World Bank on their initiative in preparing and launching last week the *World report on road traffic injury prevention* to promote much-needed awareness on this issue. I also wish to thank the Government of Oman for taking a lead in bringing this topic before the General Assembly. My thanks also go to His Excellency the Permanent Representative of Oman for his hard work, patience and guidance throughout the process of formulating the draft resolution at hand in document A/58/L.60/Rev.1.

Preventing road accidents is not anyone's responsibility in particular. Yet, it is everyone's problem. Therefore, to succeed in our endeavour of making our roads safer, concerted efforts and commitments are needed at both local and international levels.

The WHO report thoroughly analyses global road safety problems and presents practical and flexible recommendations for the improvement of road safety. Those recommendations coincide with a majority of Thailand's multisectoral policy in tackling road safety issues. I wish to share the essence of those policies with the Assembly, as they may be of relevance to the efforts undertaken by Member States.

It is now evident that in many countries, especially developing ones, motorized-transport deaths and injuries lead to significant social and economic losses. Thailand is no exception. Road accidents are one of the top three public health problems in Thailand. In 2002, social and economic losses resulting from motorized-transport deaths and injuries in Thailand amounted to 2.13 per cent of the country's gross domestic product. In that year, over 13,000 deaths and more than 1 million injuries were caused by road accidents. Several thousand victims were disabled and lost their livelihoods. Three fourths of the victims were motorcyclists, with an average mortality rate of almost two deaths per hour. Fully aware of the magnitude and impact of this problem, the Government has placed the reduction of road traffic injury high on its national agenda. Since 2002, the Government has emphasized the urgent need to design systemic policies to tackle road safety problems at all levels: local, municipal, provincial and national. The Government realizes that, first and foremost, political commitment and consistent, strict enforcement of road traffic laws at the municipal, provincial and national levels are needed in order for initiatives related to road safety to generate the intended results.

In 2003, the Government established the Road Safety Operations Centre (RSOC) to be the lead agency in coordinating efforts of various sectors of the country in designing and implementing multisectoral, integrated and systematic action plans that would effectively tackle the nation's road safety problems. Headed by a Deputy Prime Minister, the Centre has the sufficient authority and leadership to prepare a plan of action to mobilize resources and encourage cooperation from government agencies, private organizations, non-governmental organizations and civil society. RSOC has been able to establish several initiatives aimed at reducing accidents and improving safety on roads: introducing a "Don't drink and drive" campaign to alert drivers, motorcyclists and other road users to the dangers of drinking and driving; requiring motorcyclists to wear safety helmets and to turn on their headlights during daytime to increase their visibility to other motorists; imposing mandatory requirements for wearing seat belts; and enforcing speed limits, improving road conditions and encouraging the use of rest areas to ensure greater safety on the roads.

To complement those initiatives, the Government enacted legislation that increases fines and penalties for traffic violations. A policy that emphasizes stringent and prompt enforcement of the laws was adopted at the same time. Traffic police throughout Thailand are now equipped with blood-alcohol meters. Motorcyclists are now required to wear safety helmets,

and automobile passengers are required to wear seat belts at all times. Traffic police are now assisted by community volunteers to randomly set up checkpoints on major highways, expressways and local roads to detect violators. Any driver that has an excessive blood-alcohol level is fined and detained instantly before being summoned to court for penalties and community services. Motorcyclists who do not wear safety helmets are being ticketed on the spot.

Aside from stringent rules and regulations for motorists, the Government has also examined other issues associated with road safety in an attempt to address these problems in an integrated manner. Financially, we are trying to mobilize more financial resources to support road safety initiatives through the establishment of a Road Safety Fund. On data collection, the Government is upgrading injury and accident surveillance systems to collect standardized and reliable accident data for future planning. On the infrastructure front, various government agencies are improving road safety by promoting safer road planning and design, reducing hazardous locations and improving road conditions by repairing black spots and installing more traffic signs, and inducing greater use of rest areas by improving the facilities and services provided. Through education, the Government is instilling safe driving and transportation habits in children and teenagers, who are the most vulnerable to road accidents. On public relations, the Government is attempting to raise public awareness of the importance of safe driving practices and vehicle safety standards, while fostering a friendly attitude on all roads. Last but not least, our private sectors are actively involved in promoting road safety campaigns such as those on no cellular phone use while driving and on the offer of free safety helmets with a motorcycle purchase.

Thailand's Road Safety Operations Centre has been in operation for less than two years. Nevertheless, results to date are encouraging. Public awareness of the importance of safe driving and riding practices is rising, as reflected in the decreasing numbers of drunk driving incidents recorded in metropolitan areas and in the decreasing number of motorcyclists who are fined for not wearing safety helmets.

In support of efforts undertaken at the international level, the Government designated 2004 as the National Year of Road Safety in order to complement the WHO global road safety campaign. As roads continue to serve as an economic and social link between peoples, Thailand will continue to do its utmost to improve road safety in Thailand. We would also be happy to share our road safety initiatives and their results with interested countries.

As the Secretary-General and the Director-General of the WHO have clearly stated, with close coordination and collaboration from all relevant sectors, road accidents can be prevented. My delegation therefore wishes to encourage all Member States to deploy their best efforts in assessing and addressing national road safety problems, drawing upon the recommendations of reports of the Secretary-General and of the WHO as basic guidelines. My delegation also wishes to call on countries that possess expertise on road safety to share their best practices and knowledge with other countries to complement their endeavours.

At the same time, my delegation wishes to urge the United Nations system, including the WHO, and other relevant international organizations to strengthen their support to Member States that need assistance in carrying out their initiatives. My delegation strongly believes that, with the commitment of all Member States and the international community as a whole, together we can strive to make our roads safer and to maximize the benefits of road transport for all countries and peoples.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): The delegation of Egypt thanks the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Oman and the Omani delegation for their vigorous efforts to mobilize international support in addressing the global road safety crisis. Egypt is a sponsor of draft resolution A/58/L.60/Rev.1, which is before the Assembly this morning, because it is aware of the growing need for a holistic approach to improving global road safety and for stanching the continuing flow of blood from traffic accidents. That is true especially because traffic injuries are sapping human and productive potential in countries throughout the world, especially in developing countries — which desperately need all their sources of economic and human energy to meet the challenges of development.

Egypt shares the pain and suffering of the rest of the world with respect to road tragedies. Like other countries, Egypt suffers human and economic losses; it loses citizens who could be contributing to development. Moreover, road accidents entail vast

costs in the provision of medical treatment for victims, and they drain our productive capacity.

For years, Egypt has been developing and implementing policies intended to tackle the crisis. Most Government organs participate in implementing those policies, and civil society — through various organizations within the country — is playing a key role by launching awareness campaigns and providing support and assistance to victims and their families.

The draft resolution before the Assembly lays out a clear vision with respect to engendering and enhancing international cooperation to address the road safety crisis. Here, Egypt welcomes the draft resolution's invitation to the World Health Organization (WHO), working in close cooperation with the United Nations regional commissions, to act as a coordinator on road safety issues within the United Nations system, and its request that regional expertise be drawn upon.

The information and statistics set out in the *World report on road traffic injury prevention*, co-published by the WHO, further clarify the dimensions of the global crisis; the report stresses the pressing need for concerted international efforts to address the global road safety crisis. These tasks must not remain the sole preserve of the WHO and the regional economic commissions: it is the duty of all relevant regional and international institutions and organizations to participate. The private sector too has a pivotal role to play.

Egypt calls upon the Secretariat to include in the report of the Secretary-General to be submitted to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session an overview of the areas in which support can be extended to developing countries. As I have noted, those countries are at a disadvantage in facing up to the road safety crisis. We hope that this would further contribute to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): As we speak today, another 3,000 deaths are occurring as a result of road traffic accidents. Another 100,000 people are sustaining injuries. Those staggeringly high casualty figures are nearly as high as those for global conflicts, HIV/AIDS, anti-personnel mines and other major global public health concerns.

Most often, road traffic accidents do not attract as much media attention, but their impact on society can be just as adverse. Ninety per cent of these injuries occur — and will continue to occur — in developing countries. The dead or injured are often young, in their productive years, which leaves their families and economies deprived and affected. What is alarming is that, if the current trends continue, those numbers will increase by 65 per cent over the next 15 years, probably making road accidents one of the top few global public health concerns. The lack of reliable and accurate data on road traffic casualties renders it even more difficult to assess the actual extent of losses, both human and socio-economic.

What is encouraging is that most of these tragic losses can be prevented and even significantly reduced if their root causes are addressed effectively and collectively. What is required is an immediate mass awareness campaign about the seriousness of the global road safety problem at the national and international levels. What is most desirable is a true partnership among all stakeholders, including Governments, global and regional organizations, civil societies, private sectors and the international donor community in order to be able to face up to the challenge together.

Bangladesh, being a densely populated developing country in the midst of a significant societal transformation, has long identified and placed the road safety problem amongst its major national public safety concerns. The high prevalence of death and injuries from road traffic accidents every year cause us irreconcilable human suffering and irreplaceable loss of valuable lives and resources. A strong and steady civil society movement, entitled "We demand safe roads" with a manifesto entitled "Roads must be safe, not death traps", has since 1989 garnered tremendous public awareness and support to our national road safety movement. The Government is making every effort to own and drive the national road safety policies and programmes.

22 October, preceding United Nations Day, is observed in Bangladesh as the National Safe Road Day. On that day we reaffirm our national resolve to save every life possible from the tragic consequences of road accidents and hold country-wide awareness programmes. These include the collection of blood donations, the organization of seminars and rallies, and publications for citizens encouraging them to exercise greater individual civic responsibility and to observe safety measures on the road. Despite our limited

resources and institutional capacities, we plan to take this social movement to the regional and global levels through governmental and non-governmental organizations, civil society and private sector partnerships. We seek the support of friends and global institutions in this endeavour.

It is in this spirit of ownership that Bangladesh has joined the list of sponsors of draft resolution A/58/L.60/Rev.1 on the global road safety crisis. We express our deep appreciation to the Permanent Representative and delegation of Oman for their tireless efforts in negotiating this consensus text, which enjoys cross-cutting support. The World Health Organization and the World Bank are also deserving of high praise for their proactive institutional approach to the global road safety crisis, including the launching of the first *World report on road traffic injury prevention*, and for the observance of the World Health Day this year with the theme "Road safety". It could not have been more befitting.

Indeed, now is the time to act on the key recommendations of the *report*, particularly the systems approach on five critical areas for effective interventions for safer roads. Minimizing risk and optimizing safety is key. While countries develop a strong will and well-organized national social awareness movements to prevent our roads from becoming death traps, commensurate financial and technical assistance to implement those road safety capacities must be forthcoming. Bangladesh also attaches great importance to the sharing of best practices on road safety among Member States and within the United Nations system through the dissemination and management of knowledge using United Nations regional commissions, the United Nations Department of Public Information and the World Health Organization. As a member of the Economic and Social Council and Chair of the Committee on Information, we will do our utmost to achieve these objectives. The engagement of and networking among the media, civil society and the private sector are of paramount importance, as Governments alone can only do so much.

Last but not least, Bangladesh calls upon all Member States and the Secretariat to consider the proclamation by the United Nations of an international day to be observed by peoples of the world as their global road safety day. Such a day, we strongly believe, would heighten awareness among the wide range of actors and sectors about their required level of involvement. We would suggest 22 October in that regard.

Let us act now, together, coherently and in a sustained manner to evolve public health and development strategies to minimize the scourge of road accidents. Let us ensure that these are mutually reinforcing, taking us closer to the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. Hannesson (Iceland): While road traffic safety should first and foremost be addressed at the national and regional levels, it should also clearly be dealt with at the international level, preferably within the United Nations system. At the outset, I would therefore like to express Iceland's continued support for the laudable Omani initiative and thank the delegation of Oman for bringing this important subject matter to our attention.

The Icelandic Government has recently published a traffic safety plan to the year 2012. The main aim is to make Iceland a model society in road traffic safety and to raise awareness among the public that one accident is one too many. We have already experienced a reduction in fatal and other serious accidents, but the goal is a further 40-per cent decrease in such accidents in the next eight years. From 1980 to 1989, the death toll was 10.3 per 100,000 inhabitants, but in 1990 to 2000 it was reduced to 7.8.

The emphasis of the new traffic safety plan will be on safer speed; the use of safety equipment, such as seatbelts and safety seats for children; safer drivers with improved education and tests; preventing driving under the influence of alcohol, drugs or fatigue; improving the safety of roads and their environment; and strengthening police patrol and the effectiveness of the justice system in dealing with traffic law violations.

A study published in Iceland on the occasion of World Health Day on 7 April found that, while cars and roads have become safer, the three main risks to road traffic safety are speeding, drunk driving and not using seat belts. All these risks are very much within the responsibility as well as control of the individuals concerned.

It is believed that, if all drivers in Iceland were to respect speed limits, fatal accidents would be 35 to 40 per cent fewer. It has also been established that, in the years 1998 to 2000, 46 per cent of the people who died

in traffic accidents in Iceland did not use seat belts. Many of them could have saved their own lives by using them. Driving under the influence of alcohol is still a problem, but here the emphasis is on preventive measures. Surveys indicate that some progress has been made.

In Iceland, good cooperation between all the parties concerned has been essential in achieving success in improving road traffic safety and many campaigns have been launched throughout the years to engage and increase awareness among the public. The study that was issued on World Health Day was made by a committee consisting of representatives from all sectors of society, including the Government, the municipalities, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. The study established that traffic law violations make up 72 per cent of all registered law violations in the country, at an enormous cost to society, both in human and financial terms.

It is those negative consequences to our societies that make it worthwhile for all of us to also address this problem at the international level. In recent years, research on traffic safety has increased and, hopefully, more knowledge will result to add to traffic safety worldwide. For our part, we stand ready to share our experiences with other countries.

Mr. Savua (Fiji): My delegation extends its gratitude to the Secretary-General for his report on the global road safety crisis (A/58/228). The report presents an excellent overview of the humanitarian crisis that affects the lives of individuals and communities globally.

We would also like to thank Mr. Lee Jong-wook, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), for his statement on the theme of road safety, as part of the World Health Day observance on 7 April 2004. My delegation extends many thanks also to the World Health Organization for including the theme of road safety as part of World Health Day, on 7 April 2004. This is a clear indication that road safety is not only a political and social concern but, more important, a health and safety issue as well. I would also like to extend our appreciation to the Permanent Representative of Oman for spearheading and fine-tuning the draft resolution on global road safety (A/58/L.60/Rev.1), which I am certain will provide a common platform on which all Member States can be persuaded to reduce the number of road accidents.

According to statistics released by the Global Road Safety Partnership, a programme initiated by the World Bank, about 1.2 million people are killed in road accidents each year; most of these occur in developing countries. The developing countries' share of the death toll is a staggering 86 per cent, while they account for a mere 40 per cent of the world's motor vehicles. That imposes a financial burden of more than $60 billion each year — an amount exceeding the entire annual flow of official development assistance to those countries. It also adds to the severe pressure placed on medical facilities and utilizes much-needed finances, which could be more gainfully used elsewhere in the development process.

A survey recently conducted by the World Health Organization in United Nations Member countries shows that road accidents are the second leading cause of death for people between the ages of 5 and 29 and are the third leading cause of death for people between the ages of 30 and 44. The latter group actively contributes to the national economy, and the demise of such people results in loss of income to their families and loss of skills and labour to the national labour market. The WHO report forecasts that there will be an 80-per-cent increase in traffic fatalities in low- and middle-income countries by 2020 if preventive measures are not taken immediately.

As road safety is a global issue, the draft resolution will require our collective efforts to set up mechanisms that will drive strategies to assist in reducing road accidents. It is important to note that most accidents and injuries are preventable — if adequate resources and suitable measures are in place. While the primary responsibility lies with Member States, there is an even greater need to strengthen partnerships among Member States and between States and the United Nations system for sharing knowledge and best practices and maximizing the use of limited resources. In this regard, regional coordination and cooperation must also be reinforced to assist developing countries in their respective regions.

Allow me to cite some of our national statistics. Indications are that road accidents decreased by 25 per cent over the period 1995-2002, while the number of licensed motor vehicles increased by 31 per cent over the same period. The situation is characterized by the fact that in 2002 all types of road accidents witnessed an 11 per cent decrease compared to 2001. Casualties sustained in road traffic accidents increased by 10 per

cent in 2002 compared to 2001, and 34 per cent of casualties are made up of pedestrians. Forty-seven per cent of the total casualties and 52 per cent of total fatalities were recorded in the 20-40 year-old age bracket. While fatalities fell by 6 per cent, serious hospitalized cases rose by 30 per cent. The highest number of accidents occurred on Fridays and Saturdays.

Children are no exception; they are more vulnerable and more prone to road accidents. In Fiji children of 15 years of age and under accounted for 16 per cent of total casualties and 19 per cent of fatalities in 2002.

This reduction in the trend of accident statistics reflects the efforts of the Fiji National Road Safety Council to reduce accident figures. Those efforts include proactively launching awareness campaigns around the country to promote road safety for all road users, and for children in particular. Educating road users has been the hallmark of the Council in both rural and urban areas. The success of the Council's work is the result of a cordial relationship and a partnership between the Government and the private sector.

Fiji will continue to give priority to road safety. It is an issue worth investing in, in terms of money, time and resources. My country is willing to participate in regional initiatives in this regard among Pacific island States.

In conclusion, our human resources are too valuable to squander. Our global responsibility has to provide an environment conducive to ensuring that protection of human life will remain our highest priority.

Mr. Ozawa (Japan): Traffic fatalities and injuries are serious problems in all our countries. As the *World report on road traffic injury prevention* was released by the World Health Organization (WHO) just last Wednesday, this is an opportune time for us to take up road safety issues here in the General Assembly and to consider the role that the United Nations can play in promoting traffic safety in Member States.

To be effective, action on road safety must reflect the different situations of traffic rules and regulations and practices that prevail in each country. National Governments usually have the best knowledge of these matters, and thus it is they that should assume the primary responsibility for preventing road injuries, working in close cooperation with municipal and provincial authorities.

The United Nations can assist the efforts of Member States by promoting and facilitating cooperation among them, notably through facilitating the exchange of information about best practices. Each of us can learn from the others' experiences, both success stories and mistakes. The information exchanged, by its nature, is quite technical. Today, expertise on such matters resides in the regional economic commissions. Attempts to strengthen the exchange of information should therefore draw upon their expertise and should avoid duplicating the work that the regional economic commissions have already carried out. Japan believes that this principle should be respected when the World Health Organization assumes its role as a coordinator of road safety activities.

I would like to mention some of Japan's experiences. The number of traffic fatalities in my country hit a peak in 1970, with 16,765 victims. In response to the pressing need to take appropriate measures on this huge social problem, the Basic Law of Road Safety was enacted in the same year, and five-year plans have been implemented since then. In 2002, the number of fatalities fell to 8,326, about half of the 1970 level. Also, Japan is improving safety standards for motor vehicles, taking into account the worldwide harmonization of technical regulations and also promoting the development and wider use of advanced safety vehicles that utilize information technology.

From 1996 to 2003, national authorities implemented emergency measures to reduce traffic injuries, focusing on locations with a high incidence of accidents. The first step was to identify 3,196 such locations, using the data on accidents and traffic compiled respectively by the National Police Agency and the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport. The authorities on road management and the Public Safety Commission then carried out joint spot checks and detailed analyses of the causes of those accidents and implemented integrated and systematic measures, such as the improvement of intersections and traffic signals. These measures have had the effect of reducing traffic injuries by 30 per cent at those locations.

This latter experience has taught us many lessons. First, a collaborative approach by the Government

agencies concerned is indispensable. Secondly, accurate data are a prerequisite for any effective plan of action. Thirdly, each action has to be evaluated so that there will be a continuing process of improving policy.

While the primary responsibility for road safety lies with national Governments, it is true that developing countries often have limited capacities to address this issue. Japan is aware of this problem and we try to assist those countries which have the political will but lack sufficient resources to act on their resolve. For example, the Government of Japan contributed approximately $9 million to Nepal to improve the condition of 10 intersections in Kathmandu in 2001. This project included the paving of roads, erecting fences to prevent pedestrians from crossing roads, and installing traffic signals for both drivers and pedestrians. In addition, the behavioural aspects of people with regard to road safety were addressed through the preparation of posters for road safety and textbooks for traffic rules and through educational and training programmes.

There are a variety of actors who have a role to play in promoting road safety. We need to bear in mind the responsibilities of each of them. The United Nations is also an actor, but we should consider what real added value it can and will offer. With concerted efforts by all concerned, I believe that we can tackle the huge challenge of road safety efficiently and effectively.

Mr. Dauth (Australia): I am honoured to be addressing the Assembly today and I am particularly glad, I have to say, to have the occasion to do so on the important topic of global road safety. I will be brief, as I know we are trying to get through a number of speakers before lunch. These few comments by Australia are in addition to the statement delivered earlier by the Permanent Representative of Fiji on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum Group, with which we fully associate ourselves.

We consider the issue of road safety to be of great importance and have accorded it a high priority on our domestic political agenda. Our efforts at improving road safety have included a breadth of measures, such as requiring minimum safety standards in the manufacture of motor vehicles, investing in improving the quality and safety of roads, targeting known risk factors associated with motor vehicle accidents through strengthened policing, improving driver behaviour through raising public awareness of risk factors, and initiating programmes to assist young and novice drivers to become better drivers.

Australia is pleased to report that our measures aimed at improving road safety have been highly successful. Whereas in 1970, the number of road traffic deaths recorded in Australia was 30.4 per 100,000 people, by 2003 that figure had dropped by 73 per cent to 8.2 per 100,000 people.

Australia believes that the road fatality rate can be further reduced. To this effect, the Australian Government and Australian State and Territory Governments have adopted a national road safety strategy, supported by action plans, which aims to reduce the road fatality rate per 100,000 people by 40 per cent further, from 9.3 in 1999 to no more than 5.6 by 2010. Achieving this target would mean saving around 3,600 lives over the decade to 2010. It is a difficult target, but is one to which there is national commitment.

In the light of this commitment, which we all share, to do more to achieve improved road safety, Australia welcomes Oman's initiative, and particularly the work of our colleague, the Ambassador of Oman, and his instrumental role in bringing the issue of road safety to the attention of this Organization. While national initiatives may remain the cornerstone of efforts to improve road safety, there is no question that we can all benefit by sharing our experiences in this field, by exchanging information as to best practices and by learning from one another's successes.

What this draft resolution achieves, in inviting the World Health Organization — in cooperation with the various regional commissions — to act as a coordinating body on this issue is to facilitate the very exchange of information that I have spoken of. We are therefore delighted to co-sponsor the draft resolution.

Mr. Gallegos Chiriboga (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Ecuador first wishes to commend the Permanent Mission of the Sultanate of Oman for introducing onto the General Assembly's agenda an issue of such importance to contemporary society as that of the global road safety crisis. Secondly, we wish to reaffirm the readiness of the Government of Ecuador to cooperate with the United Nations in its current endeavour to achieve a significant reduction in accidents and lives lost through

what we might describe as a "road traffic culture" for the international community.

As is rightly reflected in the Secretary-General's report, deaths and injuries resulting from traffic accidents have led to a crisis in the public health sector globally. It is therefore necessary to take urgent measures to address the magnitude of the problem, which in 2000 caused the deaths of approximately 1.2 million people. This prompts us to assert the firm resolve of the Government of Ecuador to pursuing its work not only to improve roads, but also to ensure proper signage and an effective monitoring system that will allow us to provide timely assistance to people injured in vehicular collisions and constantly to update the road traffic education system.

Ecuador is a sponsor of the draft resolution before the Assembly, which we are convinced will be adopted by consensus. We feel absolutely certain that only cooperation between citizens and the relevant authorities in every country will make it possible to reduce the frequency of traffic accidents and significantly to lower the resultant death rate in the future. At the same time, international cooperation on road traffic issues is a significant factor in addressing this difficult challenge more effectively, since the exchange of information and improved knowledge of the techniques applied will allow us to enrich the domestic databases of each country. This, in turn, will help those countries to identify better ways of resolving the regrettable collateral effects of traffic accidents.

These injuries increase the number of people with disabilities, which affect their lives and those of their families and place a severe strain on the health system at the national and international levels, not only because it places greater demands on specialized personnel, but also because it has a marked impact on the fragile budgets allocated by Governments for the prevention and treatment of human health problems.

Notwithstanding all this, it is gratifying to be able to state that in Ecuador there is already a kind of road-traffic culture, as I mentioned at the outset, which has been cultivated in primary and secondary schools, where students receive in their classrooms guidelines that teach them not only about traffic laws, but also about appropriate personal behaviour and the kind of first aid they could provide in the event of a vehicle collision. What was rare a few years ago is now common practice, such as the use of seat belts, which has saved countless lives on the Ecuador's highways and city streets, and the population's belief that the best way to avoid traffic accidents is to know and comply with the rules governing this activity and to take individual responsibility for operating a vehicle only when physically and psychologically capable of doing so.

The delegation of Ecuador wishes to place on record its satisfaction at the continued presence of this important item on the agenda of the United Nations. That is a guarantee of concerted international attention, because this forum is the most appropriate and secure way to seek solutions on road traffic issues, through understanding and cooperation in both the technical and the legal areas, because very often those who cause accidents do not accept responsibility for their lack of skill or incapacity. It is thus necessary to harmonize legislation so that the guilty can be brought to trial not only in the countries where they cause the accident, but also in those to which they have fled, thus preventing them from enjoying impunity for the deaths or physical disabilities they have caused.

Mr. Laggner (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): We are happy to be here today to reaffirm our resolve to work together to combat this scourge to today's society: road traffic accidents. We commend the Secretary-General and the representative of the Government of Oman to the United Nations for their initiative in having brought the cause of combating the lack of road safety to the highest level. We also welcome the issuance of the excellent report on road traffic injury prevention, published jointly by the World Health Organization (WHO) and by the World Bank in connection with World Health Day, which, for the first time in its history, was devoted to road safety. The WHO is right in proclaiming loudly and clearly that road accidents are not inevitable.

We also hail the efforts of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), which proclaimed the week of 5-11 April as Road Safety Week, devoted to the topic of aggressive driving behaviour. Throughout that period, all ECE members simultaneously embarked on campaigns under the slogan "Respect is safety" — respect for the rules of the road of course, but also, and above all, respect for others and respect for life.

Switzerland, which also experiences road safety problems and has set itself the goal of halving the number of people killed and seriously injured by 2010, shares the same goal as the European Union in that regard and intends to associate itself with its approach. In order to attain the envisaged goals, no matter what they may be, it is not enough to simply apply short-term specific measures. Such measures need to be integrated into a more general framework, which, in addition to technical undertakings, requires very strong political will. All actors concerned should be involved in the design, development and implementation of this policy.

We also need to develop a comprehensive and consistent approach to ensure that society and the economy treat road safety and mobility as equally important; that road users follow behaviour that is responsible and respectful of others; that vehicles are safe from a technical standpoint; that infrastructure is designed, maintained and used in such a way as to ensure the safety of its users; and, lastly, that victims be promptly rescued in keeping with the highest standards. These goals can be achieved through, among other things, training, education, a policy of monitoring and effective sanctions, incentive schemes and many other measures. However, they can also be achieved through cooperation and coordination at the international level to develop experience-sharing activities based, among other things, on the accumulated knowledge within the United Nations system, perhaps by means of worldwide conventions on traffic rules and road signposting.

Switzerland fully endorses the role of WHO as a coordinator on road safety issues within the United Nations system, in keeping with the provisions of draft resolution A/58/L.60/Rev.1. We would wish to see close coordination and cooperation established between WHO and the ECE, which have solid experience in this area. There is no doubt that the fact that these two organizations are based in Geneva will encourage synergy in this field.

Today we are taking an important step in the right direction, but let us not forget that accident prevention is a long-term endeavour that will yield fruit only over the long term. We should therefore further step up our efforts to achieve our aims. Switzerland is ready to do that.

Mr. Rastan (Malaysia): Malaysia would like once again to thank and commend the Government of the Sultanate of Oman, and particularly Ambassador Al-Hinai, for the extremely proactive and constructive role it has played in generating serious discussion on the question of the global road safety crisis. We see this plenary meeting today as a very important follow-up to the General Assembly discussion of last October, which led to the adoption of resolution 58/9, and to the ongoing work being carried out by various Governments, organizations and individuals in promoting a fresh and concerted approach to the problem of road traffic accidents and in dealing with its impact and ramifications.

We congratulate the World Health Organization (WHO) on devoting the theme for this year's World Health Day to road safety, thus drawing world attention to this emerging global menace. We also congratulate WHO and the World Bank for their excellent work on the *World report on road traffic injury prevention*, which was issued in Paris in conjunction with World Health Day on 7 April 2004. We commend both organizations and the more than 100 experts who worked hard to produce the report for the very comprehensive attention given to all aspects of the problem and for the valuable recommendations made in the report. The report certainly provides a chilling reminder to all that "Road traffic injuries are a major but neglected public health challenge that requires concerted effort for effective and sustainable prevention".

The current figures and projections relating to death and injury caused by road traffic accidents are staggering. The report says that unless there is new commitment to prevention, these figures are projected to increase by about 65 per cent over the next 20 years. Similarly, the economic costs are extremely high and the social costs incalculable, in particular in terms of the trauma inflicted upon victims and their families.

It is clearly illustrated that the developing countries, where road traffic deaths and injuries are very high, possess limited capacity to implement the necessary measures in order to enhance road safety within their borders. There is certainly no dearth of commitment or effort to increase awareness within Government and society in those countries. There is an urgent need, no doubt, for greater international cooperation towards providing support and assistance to enable developing countries to improve their

capacity to deal with this problem. The building of partnerships involving all parties concerned within countries and on a global basis should be encouraged.

The Government of Malaysia pays serious attention to the problem of road traffic death and injury. As illustrated in the *World report on road traffic injury prevention*, Malaysia is taking serious efforts to improve road safety and reduce fatalities. As a rapidly developing country, Malaysia has seen a dramatic increase in vehicle ownership, averaging 8 per cent per annum, from 7.7 million in 1996 to 12.8 million vehicles in 2003. This translated into an increase in the number of road accidents from 189,109 cases in 1996 to 298,651 in 2003. At the same time, the number of fatalities resulting from road accidents decreased slightly from 6,304 cases in 1996 to 6,282 cases in 2003. However, the number of deaths per 10,000 vehicles decreased from 8.2 deaths in 1996 to 4.9 deaths per 10,000 in 2003. As illustrated in the *World report*, the National Road Safety Council of Malaysia has set a target of reducing fatalities to a ratio of less than three deaths per 10,000 registered vehicles by 2010.

The significant decrease in the number of deaths caused by road traffic accidents is attributed to the Government of Malaysia's long-standing and abiding commitment to addressing the problem of road safety among Malaysians. There has been a nationwide road traffic safety campaign and awareness programme since 1997 based on the concept of the four Es: enforcement, engineering, education and emergency services. It is our belief that if all 4Es are implemented in an integrated manner by all related Government agencies, the private sector, civil society and citizens, the target of a 30 per cent fatality reduction in road traffic accidents could be achieved.

The Road Engineering Association of Malaysia has also undertaken a comprehensive review of Malaysian road and highway standards in the light of the country's modern traffic requirements. Significant consideration has been given to the special needs of vulnerable road users, such as motorcyclists, bicyclists and pedestrians, in particular school children. The implementation of the exclusive motorcycle-only lane policy and the switching on of daytime running lights has reduced the number of fatalities involving motorcyclists. Construction of pedestrian bridges and crossings across major roads and thoroughfares in city areas near schools and the deployment of school traffic wardens have also reduced the number of traffic accidents involving school children. The Ministry of Transport has adopted a "zero pothole" policy. Road surfaces are maintained and resurfaced with porous asphalt surfacing to prevent puddles forming on road surfaces and to guarantee improved riding comfort to road users. This has proven to reduce the number of road traffic accidents in Malaysia.

We are fully aware of the findings, cited on page 22 of the *World report*, that

> "Globally, road traffic injuries are a leading cause of death among young people who drive cars or ride motorized two-wheelers",

with death rates especially high among teenagers. By increasing the legal riding age from 16 to 18 years, Malaysia has significantly reduced rates of motorcycle crashes. To prevent death and injury among children, Malaysia is also encouraging the domestic development of helmets suitable for children.

Malaysia has been and continues to be an active participant at the regional and international levels in formulating strategies for the development and sustainability of road infrastructure and the institution of measures aimed at reducing the number of road traffic accidents and, consequently, the number of fatalities. In line with these efforts, Malaysia is involved in the Global Road Safety Partnership under the aegis of the World Bank, the World Road Association, the Land Transport and Safety Committee of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the ASEAN Sub-Working Group on Road Transport and Road Safety, as well as the Road Engineering Association of Asia and Australasia.

Road traffic accidents which cause death, injury and disability are of grave concern to us. Nobody is immune to their effects. In this regard, Governments, the United Nations and its relevant agencies, other international and regional organizations, civil society and individuals have an important role to play in galvanizing international and regional efforts to address and mitigate this problem. Malaysia is once again pleased to support the present effort in this Assembly and to co-sponsor the draft resolution before us.

Mr. Al-Jomae (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): With respect to draft resolution A/58/L.60/Rev.1, I should like first to thank the Government of Oman for

its role in sensitizing the entire world to the serious implications of road traffic. I also wish to thank the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank for their efforts in publishing the *World report on road traffic injury prevention* before us today.

A close reading of the *report* reveals the dimensions of the human catastrophe arising out of road accidents. However, the growing awareness of Governments and non-governmental organizations throughout the world of the gravity of this phenomenon represents a first step on the right path. We are reassured by the happy fact that we are learning how to deal with this problem.

As opposed to other scourges that are more difficult to address, such as HIV/AIDS and malaria — the costs of treatment of which are enormous — the issue before us today will not cost any more than the price of prevention at all levels of society. As was said at a symposium held in Oman in preparation for the conference,

> "the solution to this problem lies in the political will to ensure collective responsibility, to put an end to drunk driving and to enforce the use of safety belts".

Saudi Arabia is among those countries enjoying a network of roads planned on the basis of the most modern road safety criteria and speed-limit standards. We have adopted a number of measures, the most important of which include mandatory safety belts for drivers and passengers and systematic inspection and insurance of vehicles. The audio-visual media and the press are also working to raise awareness of the dangers of speeding, especially before official holidays, and its costs to the national economy. Rest areas have also been built to allow travellers to take a break en route. As well, symposiums are regularly held to raise awareness among young people, who are the most vulnerable group. All these activities have the objective of implementing the high-level plan of 2000, which aims to reduce the number of road accident fatalities by 30,000 by the year 2015.

We now have the *World report on road traffic injury prevention*. It serves to summarize our activities and lay out what remains to be done. The report also contains recommendations and policies that we believe are good guidelines for mitigating the impact of traffic injuries.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/2 of 19 October 1994, I now call on the Observer of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Mr. Milton (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies): The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) welcomes the attention given in the General Assembly to the issue of global road safety. Road traffic injuries will kill perhaps 1.25 million people this year, and road traffic injuries are the leading cause of death worldwide for persons aged between 15 and 44. Much of that humanitarian disaster can be prevented.

Worldwide, the estimated cost is a staggering $518 billion — and, for many countries, between 2 and 3 per cent of gross domestic product. In transitional and developing countries, the cost of road deaths and injuries is estimated at double the value of all development assistance provided to those countries: a sobering statistic indeed.

The IFRC 1998 World Disasters Report included a chapter entitled "Must millions more die from traffic accidents?". The central message of that chapter is that everyone has a role to play in tackling the disaster. Just as our national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies work against communicable diseases, they are involved on a daily basis in prevention activities and in the provision of first aid and other support where road traffic injuries occur. As part of the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement's response to this issue, 25 European Red Cross societies have come together, with the support of the European Commission, to mount a road safety campaign in Europe in 2004. It targets children, under the slogan "You've only got one life, so take care".

In virtually all countries, the national Red Cross or Red Crescent society gives high priority to working for increased road safety. In Laos, for example, the very high death rate due to road accidents and its heavy impact on youth led the Red Cross society to open a special training programme aimed at young people so that they could begin peer education on road safety, traffic rules, basic first aid and general tips.

Similarly, the Jordan Red Crescent society has been motivated by the human and economic costs of road accidents. Action in Jordan plans for what the society describes as a vast mobilization campaign aimed at improving knowledge and changing attitudes.

The programme is one of the main priorities for the society in 2004, and the campaign will be launched on 4 May to link with World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day, with a special message of support from His Majesty the King.

Another programme which deserves reference is the mock rescue exercise staged in Uganda on World First Aid Day, 2003. In that case, the Red Cross society, collaborating with the police, the fire brigade and the major city hospitals, and with the support of the Shell oil company, conducted a programme to test and improve disaster preparedness techniques and to ensure the availability of the medical support required in the event of a major emergency.

The International Federation notes those examples to show that in many countries the dialogue with government at all levels works well and effectively.

To be successful, local-level partnerships need multilateral support. But partnerships at the global level are also necessary. We are particularly pleased with the partnership developed between the International Federation and its member national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies around the world, together with Sweden, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and, very important, the World Bank, the World Health Organization and private partners. The result is the Global Road Safety Partnership (GRSP), which is hosted at the International Federation secretariat in Geneva. The GRSP is an active global partnership dedicated to the improvement of road safety in transitional and developing countries. It builds local partnerships among business, civil society and Governments in order to stimulate the sharing of information and experience, to bring forward policies and actions and to broker projects aimed at the effective and sustainable reduction of road deaths and injuries. The dissemination of knowledge and the expertise collected also make the programme relevant for Governments and civil society organizations around the world. Death and injury on the roads is a social and public health issue that all parts of society must address. Whether as Governments, business or civil society, we must work together.

We strongly support the recommendations contained in the World Report published last week by the World Health Organization and the World Bank. We also strongly support the call for the designation of a coordinating body to facilitate and coordinate these activities within the United Nations and with multilateral agencies. The IFRC and the GRSP stand ready to work with such a coordinating body. We also congratulate the World Health Organization on its decision to make road safety the theme for World Health Day this year. In our view, it is only with that kind of forefront advocacy that we will be able to get our message out effectively.

We will continue to give these issues very high priority. We look forward to working with all concerned parties to find effective ways of addressing the terrible loss of life and resources that the global road safety crisis has caused.

The Acting President: In accordance with resolution 58/9 of 5 November 2003, I now give the floor to the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund.

Ms. Bellamy (UNICEF): The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is gratified by the General Assembly's decision to hold this important meeting in conjunction with World Health Day. It dramatizes the conclusion that the rising rate of road traffic injuries is in fact a public health crisis of far-reaching proportions — one that could undercut the child rights agenda reflected in the Millennium Development Goals as well as the Plan of Action approved two years ago at the General Assembly's landmark special session on children (resolution S-27/2, annex).

The World Health Organization–World Bank study, which was made public last week, shows that traffic accidents are well on their way to becoming the third leading cause of global death and disability by the year 2020. However, there is an element of hope in this rather gloomy picture: traffic injuries are both preventable and treatable.

The solutions involve a range of activities that can engage the entire United Nations system. They include such measures as improvements in road infrastructure, development of safer vehicles, stricter law enforcement, expanded health and hospital services, urban and environmental planning and programmes to promote public awareness and advocacy. Experts refer to the mix as the three "E"s: education, engineering and enforcement. UNICEF's role begins at the beginning, with education. For UNICEF, promoting road safety and injury prevention for children is a natural fit with our country

programmes of cooperation in everything from childhood development to adolescent support.

In Viet Nam, for example, childhood injury prevention activities have been integrated into the existing country programme, which includes development of a school curriculum on child safety and advocacy and mass-media efforts to raise awareness concerning the importance of road traffic safety. Practical information is also readily accessible in UNICEF's widely used "Facts for Life" booklet.

In that connection, I want to join others in taking this opportunity to commend the Sultanate of Oman and that country's Permanent Representative to the United Nations for their contribution to raising public awareness of the issue. Their dedication and hard work have been truly exceptional.

At the same time, UNICEF first Goodwill Ambassador to Oman, the rally driver Hamed Al Wahaibi, has been educating students in road safety from a professional perspective. And UNICEF Oman — our country office — in partnership with the Ministries of Education and Health and the Royal Oman Police, marked World Health Day by polling some 20,000 students concerning their views, ideas and suggestions on how to tackle the key causes of road traffic injuries and deaths. The polling was focused in the regions with the country's highest accident rates.

The key to preventing traffic fatalities and injuries will ultimately hinge on the emphatic exercise of political will at both national and international levels and the creation of partnerships to help catalyse new action with the private sector, non-governmental organizations and civil society at every level. At the same time, we recognize the vast experience acquired over more than 50 years by the Working Party on Road Traffic Safety of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, notably through its international conventions.

Many countries are becoming engaged. Next week in Bangkok, UNICEF and the Alliance for Safe Children will convene a regional conference on child injury that we hope will draw new attention to the importance of strong preventive measures if the region is to implement the Millennium Development Goals.

We at UNICEF welcome the draft resolution on road traffic safety (A/58/L.60/Rev.1), including its call for the establishment of a United Nations focal point to coordinate activities and to exchange information on good practices. At the same time, we would urge that there be explicit recognition of children and — with their full lives ahead of them — of the disproportionate burden that they bear as a result of road traffic injuries.

We at UNICEF stand ready to support and work with national Governments to transform that and other commitments into action, secure in the knowledge that in taking steps to invest fully in children today, we will ensure the enduring right of every child, in every generation, to grow to adulthood in dignity, in health and in peace.

The Acting President: Members will recall that in its resolution 58/9 of 5 November 2003, the General Assembly invited the President of the World Bank to address the Assembly. If there is no objection, and without setting a precedent, may I take it that the Assembly wishes to hear a statement by the Senior Vice-President of the World Bank?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Senior Vice-President of the World Bank.

Mr. Sarbib (World Bank): I thank the General Assembly for allowing me to speak, and I am honoured by this opportunity to address the Assembly on the global road safety crisis. I would like to thank in particular the Sultanate of Oman for its leadership on this issue.

Last week, as all know, the World Health Organization and the World Bank jointly issued the report the Assembly is discussing today. The document sets out our views. We have heard many references to it. But let me cite once again a few numbers that are unacceptable. Each day, 3,000 people die and 75,000 are injured on account of poor road safety; 80 per cent of those deaths occur in developing countries, which own only 20 per cent of the vehicles. And, as many have said before me, it costs them between 1 and 2 per cent of the gross domestic product — sometimes double what they receive in official development assistance.

Road safety is also a social equity issue, with road crashes having a disproportionate impact on the poor, who have limited access to post-crash emergency care and face costs and a loss of income that can easily push families into poverty. Global road fatalities worldwide are projected to increase by more than 65

per cent over the next 15 years. But that global number hides increasing differences. Fatalities are likely to increase by more than 80 per cent in low- and middle-income countries, but they will decrease by more than 30 per cent in high-income countries.

This is clearly a situation that calls for action. Quick, concerted and purposeful action can make a difference and reverse these unacceptable trends. The costs of inaction are too huge to ignore, and the proven benefits of sustained safety measures justify a united response by government, business and civil society. Governments need to act at the country level — we have heard of many such actions — and development agencies need to act at the global level.

The United Nations provides a unique platform for considering these issues, and our dialogue today and tomorrow will help map out important directions for the future. We must act with a sense of urgency and must focus on the results we want to achieve, especially in low- and middle-income countries, where needs are greatest.

But we can act with the confidence that we have proven prevention tools and with the knowledge that responsibility for deaths and injuries in the road transport system should no longer be placed on road users alone. Historically, a blame-the-victim approach to managing road safety performance has been actively promoted. But today, we more readily accept the fact that people make errors and that there are critical limits to human survival and recovery from injury. Our vision has shifted to the building and operation of a more forgiving road transport system able to absorb human errors in a way that does not result in death or long-term disability and loss of health.

Capacity-building will underpin our future road safety efforts, and success will be determined by the effectiveness of measures taken at three levels: building the capacity of countries to design and implement sustainable road safety strategies and measure their results; building the capacity across the World Bank Group to align and coordinate sector strategies and operations with results and country outcomes; and building the capacity of the World Bank Group and its development partners to collaborate more effectively and to harmonize efforts for greater road safety.

Our dialogue will continue beyond the next two days; no doubt it will take time to reach a consensus on the best way forward. But to focus our future deliberations, we should remind ourselves constantly of the benefits that countries could enjoy if we were indeed able to successfully scale up and accelerate measures to improve safety outcomes.

We have been modelling the relationship between traffic fatalities and economic growth in the regions we serve at the World Bank, and we have estimated the savings in lives and injuries that might be achieved over the next 15 years if further safety investments were made. For example, we estimate that more than 2.5 million lives could be saved if the projected rate of fatalities per vehicle could be reduced by a further 30 per cent by 2020. That appears to be a reasonable and achievable goal. Using the estimates of the ratios between deaths, hospitalized injuries and minor injuries presented in the *World report*, that would represent saving 37.5 million hospitalizations and approximately 175 million minor injuries.

Obviously, these are just working estimates and they may be understated. Greater reductions in fatalities per vehicle might be achievable, or we may even able to reach those goals more quickly. Some evidence also suggests that fatalities in the developing world might be significantly higher than those reported and adjusted for in our analysis, which would further push up our estimates of lives saved or injuries prevented. Maybe we could target savings of up to 3 to 4 million lives, 45 to 60 million hospitalizations and 210 to 280 million minor injuries over the next 15 years. We will work further on these estimates to quantify the results that could be achieved. When we relate them to each and every single life, it makes a big difference.

The essential point to make today is that every life is precious and that every life deserves to be protected on our roads. Even with conservative targets for improved safety performance, we can envisage saving many lives and preventing many more incapacitating injuries, alleviating human pain and suffering and, perhaps, preventing yet another source of imbalance between rich and poor nations.

These potentials are achievable. Gains in people's well-being should inspire all of us to greater global efforts. At the World Bank, we stand ready to play our part.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker on this item.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/58/L.60/Rev.1, entitled "Improving global road safety".

I should like to announce that, since the publication of the draft resolution, the following countries have become co-sponsors: Costa Rica, Fiji, France, Germany, Liechtenstein, Nepal, Nauru, Portugal, Qatar, the Russian Federation, Senegal and Turkey.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/58/L.60/Rev.1?

Draft resolution A/58/L.60/Rev.1 was adopted (resolution 58/289).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 160?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.

United Nations A/58/PV.85

General Assembly
Fifty-eighth session

Official Records

85th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 14 April 2004, 3 p.m.
New York

President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte ..... (Saint Lucia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Zarif (Islamic Republic of Iran), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 21

The role of diamonds in fuelling conflict

Letter from South Africa transmitting the final report of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (A/58/623)

Draft resolution (A/58/L.59)

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): I come before the Assembly to introduce the report of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme that is before it at this meeting.

The date of 31 December 2003 marked the end of South Africa's term as Chair of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme. We were pleased to hand over the chairing of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme to Canada on 1 January 2004. We commend the Canadians on the diligence and thoroughness of their chairing of the Kimberley Process so far.

It is indeed significant and important that the Chair should pass to Canada as a major diamond-producing country. It emphasises that the issue of conflict diamonds is not an African issue. On the contrary, it is an issue that affects the whole global diamond-producing, trading and processing community. Only with the commitment of all players in the diamond industry can the integrity of any system to combat conflict diamonds be guaranteed.

For that reason, it is commendable that the Kimberley Process has attracted such widespread support and now enjoys the participation of all major diamond-producing, trading and processing centres. We need to continue to encourage participation by all relevant players in the Kimberley Process so that it can be assured of full coverage of all diamond-trading activities.

In the past year, there has been good progress made in the implementation of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme. Of great significance is the outcome of the Sun City plenary held in South Africa, at which agreement was reached on monitoring and investigative procedures for the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme. The procedures remain voluntary, but such is the commitment of Kimberley Process parties that we anticipate the full cooperation of all Governments in allowing access for investigation where serious discrepancies have been found to arise.

A review mission to the Central African Republic was carried out successfully, to the satisfaction of all parties concerned, and we are confident that the proposed review mission to the Republic of the Congo will help to clear up discrepancies in diamond export figures there and will point the way forward in improving the effectiveness of the control systems.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

04-30862 (E)

We would welcome offers by all parties to the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme to host review missions, which can only bolster confidence in the system and strengthen it. South Africa similarly believes that, as statistical records are built up in terms of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme, the analysis of those statistics will help to underpin the Scheme and to identify potential problems more effectively.

We would also like to thank the community of non-governmental organizations for their vigilance in keeping this issue under review and making sure that the system increases in effectiveness. They have been essential partners in this whole initiative and we trust that the system will continue to have their support. Their ongoing critical review of developments is an essential element in the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme.

South Africa would also like to commend the diamond industry, and especially the World Diamond Council, for their support of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme and their strong participation in its meetings. Their activities are at the heart of the system and their support is essential. Their commercial success is important to a number of participants and, as Chair, South Africa was always able to depend on their constructive participation.

In conclusion, all our members know that the battle against conflict diamonds is far from over. We have to maintain the integrity of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme and continue to implement its provisions. Our experience in implementing the system dictates that we may need to look at further developing the system where necessary. The success of the review mechanisms is important in this regard, as will be the emergence of a statistical database that is able to provide an accurate picture of global rough diamond flows.

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Canada to introduce draft resolution A/58/L.59.

Mr. Rock (Canada): I thank Ambassador Kumalo not only for his introduction of the report today, but also for the outstanding work that South Africa has done as Chair of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme.

I am honoured today to introduce the draft resolution that reflects the work done to date and I am very grateful that a strong consensus has developed in support of it. May I bring to the Assembly's attention some additional countries that have agreed to co-sponsor the draft resolution since the documents were prepared. The additional co-sponsors are Angola, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iceland, Indonesia, Italy, Latvia, Lesotho, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Moldova, New Zealand, the Philippines, Sierra Leone, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine and Zimbabwe.

It is a great honour for Canada to serve as Chair of this important Process for 2004. This debate and the draft resolution we are adopting are very important for the strong signal they send. By reaffirming its support for decisions and actions taken, the General Assembly will strengthen the determination of the Kimberley Process participants to comprehensively implement the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme. In our view, such comprehensive and long-term implementation is necessary to ensure that the link between conflict diamonds and armed conflict is severed once and for all.

Through the Kimberley Process, we have made substantial progress in combating the trade in conflict diamonds. On the basis of a very fruitful meeting in Sun City, South Africa, in October, the final dimensions of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme have now been negotiated. Forty-seven participants, including the European Community, are currently implementing the scheme, which covers the vast majority of the global diamond trade. We are in regular contact with a number of other prospective participants to promote the widest possible participation in the Scheme.

It is clear that the Kimberley Process is having a real impact. It is now well understood that Governments, industry and civil society expect and require that the global trade in rough diamonds be conducted in an open and transparent manner and through legitimate markets. To show their commitment to those principles, participants have acted to seize shipments of rough diamonds lacking Kimberley Process certificates and to prosecute smugglers.

Most important of all is the positive contribution that the Kimberley Process is making in those

countries that have suffered the devastating effects of conflict diamonds. Since the Certification Scheme began to work, a growing portion of diamonds has been channelled through official Government mechanisms. In Sierra Leone, for instance, since the country's participation in the scheme, recorded exports have grown some 200 per cent, from $26 million in 2001 to $76 million in 2003, while in the Democratic Republic of the Congo recorded exports have increased some 70 per cent, from $395 million in 2002 to $642 million in 2003. Authorities in both of those countries have explicitly and publicly associated this positive trend with the Kimberley Process.

(*spoke in French*)

The draft resolution before us speaks of breaking the link between the illicit trade in rough diamonds and armed conflict as a contribution to the prevention and settlement of conflict. The contribution of the Kimberley Process is fundamental in that regard and is thus deserving of the full support of the General Assembly. We are therefore very pleased, again this year, at the full and unswerving support of members for the draft.

(*spoke in English*)

The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme makes a crucial contribution to the ongoing implementation of fragile peace agreements in Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and Sierra Leone by denying resources to potential spoilers. As those peace agreements take root, the Kimberley Process will remain an important vehicle for preventing the outbreak of future conflicts.

The participants are now engaged in carrying forward our work based on a strong foundation built under the supervision of South Africa during its term as Chair and on a close relationship with the diamond industry and civil society. The challenges that lie before the Kimberley Process this year — the challenges of implementation — revolve around effective monitoring and the collection of statistics.

As the draft resolution notes, at the Kimberley Process plenary meeting in Sun City, South Africa, last October, participants endorsed a peer review system consisting of three pillars: first, the submission of annual reports on national implementation; secondly, voluntary review visits to all participants; and thirdly, the deployment of review missions in the event of credible indications of significant non-compliance.

(*spoke in French*)

As Chair, Canada is firmly committed to the implementation of that important decision. Thus, the first of such review visits was undertaken to the United Arab Emirates on March 27 and 28, 2004. Moreover, we are encouraged that nearly half of all participants have expressed an interest in receiving a voluntary review visit and we are convinced that other countries will do so in the near future.

(*spoke in English*)

The draft resolution also addresses the important aspect of the provision of statistics by the Kimberley Process participants. Analysis of statistics on production, import and export for rough diamonds is essential to identifying anomalies that may indicate potential entry points for conflict diamonds into the legitimate trade. The collection of reliable and comparable data from a broad range of producing and trading countries presents, of course, considerable challenges. Important progress has been made in recent months, however, and statistics from the majority of participants are now available to participants and observers on the statistics web site of the Kimberley Process. The task ahead for the certification scheme now is to routinely analyse this data to ensure effective implementation.

Some four years ago, Member States met in this Hall to support the development of effective measures to break the link between armed conflict and so-called conflict diamonds. As is reflected in the draft resolution before us today, we can now take satisfaction that we have the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme at our disposal. It is an essential tool in fulfilling this critical objective of the international community and in advancing human security by preventing future armed conflict driven by the illicit trade in diamonds.

Mr. Siv (United States of America): The United States is pleased to co-sponsor the draft resolution on the role of diamonds in fuelling conflict.

We have been pursuing a solution to the problem of conflict diamonds since their horrific, destructive effects became known in the late 1990s. We have worked hard with other Governments, the diamond industry and human rights organizations to create a

controlled trading system for rough diamonds. We seek to halt the flow of conflict diamonds while avoiding harm to the legitimate diamond industry.

We have seen striking progress towards that goal. In November 2003, 36 countries, plus the European Community, pledged commitment to the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme for rough diamonds. Domestically, each participant in the Kimberley Process has put legislation in place to implement its commitments to the Process. In the United States, Congress drafted and passed the Clean Diamond Trade Act and President George W. Bush signed it within just three months — unusually rapid action in the United States system.

One year later, the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme is up and running. We know it is working on some levels because rough diamond shipments between Kimberley Process participants are routinely stopped and scrutinized and some participants have seized shipments that have arrived in their countries in violation of the Kimberley Process.

Perhaps more tellingly, a representative from a non-governmental organization that has been carefully monitoring the Process reported that two former dealers in conflict diamonds he had met became upset when he mentioned the Kimberley Process and complained bitterly that it had put them out of business.

The participants have been active over the past year, improving and refining the system. We have assured ourselves that we have all met the minimum undertakings of the Kimberley Process; we have agreed on a system of peer review; and we have conducted peer review visits to two participants, with many more scheduled. We now number 48 participants, including the European Community, and our system includes the vast majority of the world's producers, traders and consumers of rough diamonds.

My Government is proud of our leadership role in the Process — a role that our Congress has explicitly and repeatedly supported. We recognize that the system would never have come into being without the leadership of a number of key participants, including African producer States. In truth, the list of Governments that have played a leadership role is as long as the list of participants, for unless each participant shows leadership, this voluntary system will not work.

We offer special thanks to South Africa, which chaired the Kimberley Process so effectively and brought the system from vision to reality; to Canada, the current Chair, which is doing such a masterful job at leading the process during its infancy; and to Russia, which will become the next Chair. I also acknowledge the important work of the European Commission in furthering the Process.

Finally, the Kimberley Process would never have come this far without the active support and participation of the diamond industry and concerned non-governmental organizations. They have offered invaluable insight into what must be done to halt the scourge of conflict diamonds.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): This year the General Assembly is again addressing the question of the role of diamonds in fuelling conflict and reaffirming the need to continue international collective action, under United Nations auspices, to study the root causes of conflicts in all their aspects, particularly in Africa, where armed conflict has long been linked to the illicit trade in diamonds, within the general framework of the question of combating the illegal exploitation of natural resources in a number of African countries.

In that context, our debate today is a necessary review of the development of international action embodied in the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme, and of the most serious manifestations of conflicts in Africa. Our delegation has taken note of the report presented by the previous Chair of the Kimberley Process — the Government of South Africa — which stresses that the Kimberley Process is an interesting model of the concept of partnership among the Governments concerned, the companies producing and trading in diamonds and the relevant civil society organizations, all working together in the area of the maintenance and strengthening of international security, with support from the United Nations, represented by the General Assembly. The World Trade Organization, is also cooperating, by granting waivers to States participating in the Certification Scheme; this reaffirms that all the diverse members of the international community must assume joint responsibility to protect international peace and security. In that regard, we wish to state how important it is that the General Assembly promote participation in the Certification Scheme through the annual adoption of a resolution.

We hope that, in the next stage, further steps will be taken to broaden participation in the Kimberley Process and to pay the requisite attention to enhancing technical capacity in Africa, in order to ensure tighter control over mining and trading in diamonds, in order to guarantee that they are compatible with the Certification Scheme and to support the allocation of revenues to attaining development and achieving peace and stability, while not hindering the legitimate diamond trade in general.

The success of the Certification Scheme and its ability to help eliminate the use of illicit diamonds to finance armed conflict are linked to the implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions in ensuring tighter control over mining activities in countries experiencing internal conflict or taking the first steps towards peace. Clear criteria are needed to enable us to take timely decisions to lift Security Council embargoes on the export of diamonds from African countries emerging from conflict, making it possible for diamond revenues of those countries to enhance the ability of transitional or elected Governments to partly finance reconstruction and rehabilitation projects and programmes, create job opportunities and support the State budget. The model adopted by the Security Council in the case of Sierra Leone exemplifies the required coordination between the Council and the Kimberley Process in comprehensive support of peace-building.

Our delegation fully appreciates the efforts undertaken by South Africa in support of the Kimberley Process and in mobilizing international support during its chairmanship of the Certification Scheme in 2003. We also look forward to great success for the Kimberley Process under the guidance of the Canadian Government in 2004.

The Egyptian delegation will support the draft resolution before the General Assembly.

Ms. Pulido Santana (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The harmful impact of traffic of rough diamonds on fuelling armed conflict is increasingly evident. Since the topic was first considered by the United Nations, significant progress has been made in the fight against the illegal trade of diamonds. Undoubtedly, the most important element has been the establishment of the Kimberley Process and, more recently, the implementation of its Certification Scheme, in which Venezuela is a participant. The Certification Scheme is an extremely valuable and appropriate mechanism for detecting and preventing diamond trade in conflict zones; ultimately, it has a direct impact on the promotion of international peace and security.

The delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela wishes to express its recognition of the outstanding work done by the Government of South Africa on behalf of the Kimberley Process. As Chair of the Process, South Africa skilfully facilitated the work of implementing the Certification Scheme during its first year in force. We are certain that the Canadian chairmanship of the Process this year will maintain and enhance the progress achieved thus far. Canada can rely on Venezuela's cooperation in continuing to work to achieve the objectives of the Kimberley Process and its Certification Scheme.

The delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela believes it is important for the General Assembly to considering the item before it. The item is relevant not only because of its nature, but also essentially because it is being incorporated into a broader vision of conflict prevention and resolution. We are aware of the negative impact of diamond trade in conflict zones; that trade is a source of financing for conflicts, facilitates the purchase and proliferation of weapons and, at the same time, curbs opportunities for growth and economic and social development, thus perpetuating the vicious circle of conflicts. From this holistic perspective on conflict prevention and resolution, proper handling of the problem will undoubtedly contribute to the maintenance and strengthening of international peace and security.

Venezuela advocates a broad and comprehensive concept of peace which will make is possible to deal with all causes and factors that affect the origin and development of conflicts and which, at the same time, incorporates the commitment of all States to work towards creating economic and social conditions that will make it possible to eradicate the causes. Our country is resolved to fulfil all its obligations as a member of international community and vis-à-vis the resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly. It spares no effort in cooperating with and fulfilling provisions relating to the maintenance of international peace and security. Our participation in the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme reflects that thinking and that commitment.

Venezuela has been a participant in the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme since 1 February 2003, and that year the Venezuelan Government took the necessary measures for the effective implementation of that Scheme by issuing a certificate recording the fact that the rough diamonds of the shipment in question have been handled in accordance with the provisions of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme.

However, the importance of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme is not merely political in nature, but also socio-economic, given the benefits that promoting legitimate trade in diamonds can generate by fostering the conditions necessary to stimulate the economic and social development of many countries, particularly with respect to job creation. Likewise, proper implementation of the Certification Scheme will have a significant impact on the economies of participating countries, as it will serve as an effective mechanism to suppress smuggling and customs fraud.

As more countries come to participate in the Scheme, its implementation will yield better results. In that regard, and as a sponsor of draft resolution A/58/L.59, we appeal to the countries that are not yet participating to join in the efforts already under way. The entry into force of this mechanism and the progress made in implementing it prove to us that the desired objectives can be achieved when countries have common interests and when there is real cooperation and political will. What is even more important is that it is possible to move forward in the quest for the social and economic well-being of our peoples. Therefore, we reiterate the appeal to Member States that are not yet participants in the Certification Scheme to join it and thus help strengthen the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme.

Mr. Dube (Botswana): Botswana welcomes the report of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) submitted to the President of the General Assembly by the outgoing Chair, South Africa, in compliance with resolution 57/302 of 15 April 2003 (A/58/623). The said resolution requested the Chair of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme on rough diamonds to report to the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly on progress made in the implementation of the Scheme.

I wish to pay tribute to South Africa for the sterling job it has done in guiding us through the very difficult negotiations in the Kimberley Process. I also wish to congratulate and welcome Canada as it assumes the Chair of the Process.

The report shows the remarkable progress made by the KPCS during the past two years. First, the Certification Scheme came into effect on 1 January 2003, as had been proposed. Participating States were, however, given until May 2003 to put into effect the full implementation of the minimum standards required by the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme. As of 31 October 2003, 44 States and one regional organization — the European Community — had been certified as participants in the KPCS. Many more countries have since indicated their desire to join. Even more remarkable is that participants finally adopted a recommendation that provides for the establishment of a peer review mechanism for monitoring the implementation of the Scheme.

The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme has, thus, in many respects fulfilled the mandate of the Security Council and the General Assembly: to bring about a system that would eliminate from the legitimate trade in rough diamonds the nefarious trading in conflict diamonds which has largely been responsible for so much human misery in some of the conflicts in Africa.

The coming into effect of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme now places a major challenge upon States Members of the United Nations to comply fully with the Scheme, whether as diamond producers, as diamond manufacturers or as consumers. It also places a heavy burden upon the diamond industry itself, through the World Diamond Council, the Diamond Manufacturers Association and other trade bodies, to educate their membership and their clients about the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme. After all, during the negotiations, the diamond industry made the following undertakings: first, to implement a code of conduct to prevent buying or selling of conflict diamonds; secondly, to implement a system of warranties that all invoices for the sale of diamonds or diamond jewellery contain a written guarantee that the diamonds are conflict-free; and thirdly, to inform employees about the industry's policies and Government regulations on the sale of diamonds.

The eyes of consumers and lobby groups will be watching closely the implementation of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme. The credibility and the

effectiveness of the Process strongly depend on the diamond industry being held accountable with respect to commitments made to stop the trade in illicit diamonds. We as Governments will therefore have to maintain vigilance in its implementation.

Botswana, as one of the conveners of the Kimberley Process, and given its heavy dependence on the diamond industry, remains fully committed to the Kimberley Process. We implemented the Scheme on 1 January 2003. We have continued to make improvements in the internal controls dealing with rough diamonds, which include compiling and submitting Botswana's diamonds statistics, as required by the Certification Scheme. Recently, as a demonstration of our commitment to the Scheme, Botswana invited a peer review mission to come to audit our systems. We expect the peer review to be undertaken in May or June this year.

Botswana has joined in sponsoring the draft resolution (A/58/L.59) before us along with the report of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme. We wish to pay tribute to the new Chair, Canada, which has done such a magnificent job in piloting the draft resolution. We urge its adoption by the General Assembly by acclamation.

Mr. Constantino (Angola): We are very pleased to participate in this important debate on agenda item 21, entitled "The role of diamonds in fuelling conflict". We congratulate Canada on its election as Chair of the Kimberley Process for 2004. We also congratulate South Africa on the excellent job it did and the excellent contribution it made to the Kimberley Process during its chairmanship. Obviously, we fully support the recommendation referred to in the report (A/58/623) that South Africa submitted to the General Assembly.

We would like to associate ourselves with the statement made by the representative of Canada, Chair of the Kimberley Process.

Efforts to address the problem of conflict diamonds started some time ago. Mining ministers of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) agreed, in 2000 at Cape Town, South Africa, that international action was imperative to prevent the problem of conflict diamonds from negatively affecting the legitimate diamond trade, which makes a critical contribution to the economies of those countries. A technical forum to address concerns related to conflict diamonds was subsequently held at Kimberley, and a series of technical meetings was followed in September 2000 by a ministerial meeting, where major diamond producing, processing, importing and exporting countries made recommendations on the conflict diamonds issue.

We believe that the General Assembly — particularly by virtue of its adoption of resolutions 55/56 and 56/263 — has a crucial role to play in breaking the link between the illicit transaction of rough diamonds and armed conflict as a contribution to prevention and settlement of armed conflicts.

The Kimberley Process, as stated in its report submitted by South Africa to the General Assembly, continues to enjoy widespread and growing support, and it now represents all major diamond producing, trading and processing countries. The progress achieved in the international implementation of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme demonstrates what can be achieved by the international community in addressing issues of serious international concern such as the illicit trade in diamonds. It is hoped that the United Nations will continue to support the implementation of the Kimberley Process, since it helps to ensure the effective implementation of relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions pertaining to the trade in conflict diamonds.

From the outset, Angola has played an important role in international efforts to address the global trade in conflict diamonds — which has had devastating effects on peace and human security in several African countries, including Angola — but also in ensuring that decisions involving Security Council sanctions on this matter have been translated into effective action. Therefore, we look forward to the unanimous adoption of the draft resolution (A/58/L.59) before us. We will continue to do whatever we can to ensure that the issue of conflict diamonds continues to be addressed in a comprehensive manner through implementation of the international Certification Scheme.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 3208 (XXIX) of 11 October 1974, I now call on the observer for the European Community.

Mr. Carro Castrillo (European Community): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The acceding countries Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta,

Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, the candidate countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro and the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

Breaking the link between the trade in rough diamonds and the fuelling of armed conflict is now firmly established as a recurrent item on the Assembly's agenda, as it should be. The sale of rough diamonds by rebel movements has helped to fuel some of the terrible conflicts that have ravaged parts of Africa over the past decade. Both the General Assembly and the Security Council have addressed the issue in the past, and that has contributed decisively to persuading the international community — particularly diamond producing and trading countries as well as the international diamond industry — to adopt concrete measures to stop the flow of conflict diamonds. In particular, it has provided essential backing to the Kimberley Process.

At this year's session of the General Assembly, we can say with confidence — perhaps for the first time — that the Kimberley Process is no longer just a process: it has given rise to the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme, which has now been in operation for a full year. In the course of that year, the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme has found answers to most of the questions that had remained open after the Interlaken document was adopted in November 2002.

The Kimberley Process has thus found an effective response to the challenge of ensuring that those applying to join the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme are actually able to fulfil its obligations by establishing a Participation Committee. That has ensured that the Scheme's minimum requirements are applied rigorously when new participants are admitted, while at the same time allowing the widest possible participation in the Scheme, as called for by last year's General Assembly resolution (resolution 57/302).

Moreover, with the agreement on peer review adopted at last year's Sun City plenary meeting, the Kimberley Process has risen to the challenge of devising effective and comprehensive monitoring provisions. If properly implemented, these will help to ensure that the provisions of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme are upheld by all participants. The EU believes that such monitoring is crucial if we are to prevent loopholes through which illicit diamonds can enter the legitimate diamond market.

We wish emphatically to commend South Africa for having steered the Kimberley Process during this decisive first phase. As Chair of the Process, South Africa has consistently shown the firm yet consensual touch needed to galvanize a varied coalition of Governments, industry representatives and non-governmental organizations behind a common purpose. The EU also wishes to express its appreciation to Canada for having taken over the difficult assignment of chairing the Kimberley Process in 2004.

The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme, strengthened by extensive provisions for monitoring by peer review, is now a viable instrument backed by a remarkable effort at the national level — and, in our case, at the European level — to give effect to its provisions. Nonetheless, the Kimberley Process clearly continues to require the strong support of the United Nations.

We should avoid any sense of complacency about implementation of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme. This year, one of the main challenges for the Scheme will be effective implementation of the peer review system agreed upon last year. The European Community, as Chair of the Working Group on Monitoring in the Kimberley Process, will work closely with the Canadian Chair and with other participants in building as comprehensive and effective a review programme as possible. The Scheme may also have to confront individual situations in which its provisions are not being implemented as they should be. It will need to deal with those situations equitably yet decisively. The strong backing given to the Scheme by the United Nations will provide it with both the authority and the responsibility to do so.

Let me make one final observation. Many of the wars that the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme was designed to starve of their sustenance have now abated. But the EU believes that, as a conflict prevention instrument, the Scheme remains essential. The adoption of this draft resolution (A/58/L.59) will send a strong message that the international community

is not complacent about the continuing potential of diamonds in fuelling conflict.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/58/L.59, entitled "The role of diamonds in fuelling conflict: breaking the link between the illicit transaction of rough diamonds and armed conflict as a contribution to prevention and settlement of conflicts". I should like to announce that, since Canada's introduction of the draft resolution, the following countries have become sponsors: Bulgaria, Estonia, Guyana and Lithuania.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/58/L.59?

Draft resolution A/58/L.59 was adopted (resolution 58/290).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 21?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 4.05 p.m.

United Nations A/58/PV.86

General Assembly
Fifty-eighth session

Official Records

86th plenary meeting
Thursday, 6 May 2004, 10 a.m.
New York

President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte ..... (Saint Lucia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 124 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations

The President: I would like to invite the attention of the General Assembly to documents A/58/688/Add. 6 and Add.7, in which the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that, since the issuance of his communications contained in documents A/58/688 and Add. 1 to Add.5, the Solomon Islands, Uganda and Vanuatu have made the necessary payments to reduce their arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of the information contained in those documents?

It was so decided.

Agenda items 50 and 60 (*continued*)

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Draft resolution (A/58/L.8/Rev.1)

The President: Members will recall that the General Assembly held its debate on agenda item 50 at its 40th to 42nd plenary meetings, on 22 and 23 October 2003. At its 75th plenary meeting, on 17 December 2003, the General Assembly adopted decision 58/529, entitled "Commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development". Members will also recall that the Assembly held its debate on agenda item 60 at its 43rd plenary meeting, on 27 October 2003. At its 68th plenary meeting, on 3 December 2003, the General Assembly adopted resolution 58/16, entitled "Responding to global threats and challenges".

In connection with these two items, the General Assembly now has before it a revised draft resolution issued as document A/58/L.8/Rev.1, on the major high-level event to be convened in 2005. As I indicated to Permanent Representatives in my letter of 28 April 2004, draft resolution A/58/L.8/Rev.1 is the outcome of a long process of consultations and negotiations. My own consultations on the draft resolution indicate that it now accommodates and addresses the major concerns of delegations in a reasonable manner, so as to generate consensus. I have been assured that the draft resolution enjoys broad support.

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the Permanent Representative of Qatar, His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, Chair of the Group of 77 and China, and his delegation, for the extensive and dedicated work they have done to ensure broad consensus on the draft resolution.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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The major high-level event, which draft resolution A/58/L.8/Rev.1 addresses, is one that is broad in its scope. The mandate of the event as set out in the draft resolution encompasses a comprehensive review of the progress made in the fulfilment of all the commitments contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration. That would include internationally agreed development goals and the global partnership required for their achievement.

As well, the mandate of the event incorporates a comprehensive review of progress made in the integrated and coordinated implementation, at the national, regional and international levels, of the outcomes and commitments of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields.

The requested report of the Secretary-General is also mandated to be a comprehensive one, and as such should address all the pertinent issues contained in the Millennium Declaration and in the outcomes of major summits and conferences in the economic and social fields. I would urge all Member States to participate actively in the process of consultations that would inform this report, which will now form the basis of the review that the major high-level event will undertake.

Draft resolution A/58/L.8/Rev.1 has been the subject of consultations and negotiations for some seven months now. There is only a short time remaining for me to carry out, during the fifty-eighth session, the consultations foreseen in the draft resolution, for which I will require the full cooperation of all Member States. This time does not allow us to begin a new round of negotiations and consultations on what is, indeed, a purely procedural draft resolution. In any event, it may not be wise to do so, given the broad support for the draft resolution as it now stands.

In this spirit, I would urge Members States to join in the consensus adoption of draft resolution A/58/L.8/Rev.1.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/58/L.8/Rev.1.

Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of position before action is taken on the draft resolution, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote or position are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. McIvor (New Zealand): Mr. President, I will try to make myself heard above the considerable background noise, to which you have referred.

It is always a pleasure to take the floor in this forum on behalf of Australia, Canada and New Zealand, as I do today.

The draft resolution before us deals with a subject that, increasingly, is the focus of critical attention from all delegations — namely, what are we actually doing to give effect to the objectives and aspirations of the Millennium Summit and to implement the commitments made at the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields? The draft is the culmination of protracted consultations and negotiations in which many — though not all — delegations have participated. Throughout that process, and in other forums, our three delegations — and, indeed, many others — have consistently emphasized several points.

In our view, it is essential that the proposed high-level meeting in 2005 focus squarely on the question of implementation and not seek to revisit previously agreed outcomes. It is our understanding from the consultations and from statements that delegations have made elsewhere and at other times that no delegation disagrees with this.

We also believe that the proposed event would provide an important occasion for delegations to reaffirm previously agreed commitments. Moreover, the review should, as the draft resolution notes, be comprehensive and should not presume a more specific focus on selected issues.

Next year is a milestone in the history of the United Nations. A stock-taking of progress towards the objectives and commitments we have set ourselves should not occur just in the abstract. Rather, as the Organization nears its sixtieth anniversary, we should also ask whether the structures and tools currently at our disposal are what we need in the twenty-first century to achieve our goals. We trust that next year's event will take account of the findings and conclusions of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change and other relevant processes under way.

We have a unique opportunity next year. We have one chance to assemble the highest levels of Government to consider these important matters. We

must get it right, and we have little time to plan. While we retain concerns about the current text and the way in which it has evolved, we are ready to join a consensus because of the importance of the subject. With that in mind, we must ensure that our preparations are thorough and that all delegations are able to participate fully in them. We look forward to working with you, Sir, in the coming months as you conduct your open-ended consultations.

Mr. Wrafter (Ireland): Ambassador Ryan has asked me to apologize for the fact that he was unable to make this statement in person.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Serbia and Montenegro; and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries Iceland and Liechtenstein, members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

The EU supports the draft resolution before us today. The text represents months of hard work since the first draft was presented by Morocco as the then-Chairman of the Group of 77. Since January, Qatar has assumed the chairmanship of the Group and the role of promoter of the draft resolution.

We consider that the adoption of the draft represents a small but important point on the road to the major event at the commencement of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly in 2005.

Our goal is the effective implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, in particular the Millennium Declaration, which, for the EU countries, constitutes the overarching policy framework for the United Nations in the economic and social fields. The Millennium Development Goals and the other internationally agreed goals provide us with clear objectives in the economic and environmental areas on which the international community needs to focus its attention and, above all, its action.

The EU stands ready to make a substantive contribution to the major event, where the United Nations will undertake a stocktaking of the progress made in implementing the Millennium Declaration and towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. On 27 April last, EU Development Ministers invited the European Commission to take forward work on the preparation and coordination of a consolidated EU contribution to the international stocktaking of the Millennium Development Goals. It is expected that a synthesis report prepared by the European Commission will be submitted to EU Development Ministers no later than April 2005.

We look forward to and will constructively engage in the open-ended consultations to be carried out by you, Sir, as President of the General Assembly.

Mr. Staehelin (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland is fully aware that the process of negotiation of the draft resolution before us has taken too much time. We therefore collectively find ourselves in a difficult situation which calls for a prompt solution. In that regard, Switzerland intends to fully cooperate with you, Sir, and we are prepared to join in what seems to be a consensus.

Switzerland, however, wishes to make the following three comments for the record.

First, the process of consultation and negotiation on this draft resolution became opaque on 24 February last, and communication among all parties concerned was not ensured — something that we deeply regret.

Secondly, the text before us today cannot be considered optimal. In particular, the disappearance of any explicit reference to the reaffirmation of the outcomes and results of the major conferences and summits of the United Nations in the economic, social and related areas, including the Millennium Summit, is deeply regrettable. Switzerland continues to believe that these conclusions and outcomes must be reaffirmed unambiguously, and it is ready to do so.

Thirdly, Switzerland does not believe that the outcomes and results of those conferences and summits should be renegotiated.

We are pleased to participate fully and actively in the follow-up to the process, which will from now on be in your capable hands. We wish to convey our full confidence in you, convinced as we are that will conduct the consultations entrusted to you in an inclusive and competent manner.

Mr. Løvald (Norway): Like previous speakers, I should like to comment on the draft resolution that we are about to adopt today.

Let me first underscore the importance Norway attaches to the high-level meeting at the commencement of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly in 2005. We believe that the major event will provide us with a unique occasion to take stock of the progress made in the follow-up to previously agreed outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits and in particular of the Millennium Development Goals.

Norway intends actively to use the major event to seek to reaffirm the goals and objectives we have previously signed on to by focusing on how to secure fast-track implementation of our commitments.

We would hope that the major event would be a most significant meeting at the highest level to follow up and take action, in particular towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. We intend to participate actively in what must be open-ended and transparent consultations — under your able leadership, Sir — with all parties concerned and can assure you that we will do our utmost to contribute so that the high-level meeting in 2005 will serve as a true impetus for a strengthened implementation of our common commitments.

Finally, we are therefore ready to join in consensus on the text before us.

Mr. Haraguchi (Japan): First of all, I would like to welcome the consensus reached on this important draft resolution and congratulate you, Sir, for exerting leadership to achieve this consensus. As is stipulated in paragraph 3 of the draft resolution, we now have to direct our efforts towards the open-ended consultations to prepare for the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly next year. I can assure the Assembly that Japan will actively participate in those consultations and will do its utmost to make its contribution to the preparation for that major event.

This draft resolution, as you have just indicated, Sir, is submitted and adopted under two agenda items: items 50 and 60. I would also like to draw attention to the fact that the draft resolution is the successor to resolution 57/144 on follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit. As you clearly stated in your intervention, next year we will be undertaking a comprehensive review of the progress made in the fulfilment of all the commitments contained in the Millennium Declaration. In order to ensure good planning for such a heavy agenda, we should begin our open-ended consultations as soon as possible.

We wish to reiterate that last year, the Secretary-General mentioned to us in the General Assembly that, in his view, we, the member States, must not shy away from questions about the adequacy and effectiveness of the rules and instruments at our disposal, especially the Security Council. The Secretary-General is expected to present his recommendations based on the findings of the high-level panel towards the end of this year. We expect that his recommendations will touch upon reform of the functions and institutions of the United Nations, including its Security Council. When the heads of State and Government meet next year for the high-level plenary meeting, it would be opportune for them to address this topic, too. Japan is of the view that United Nations reform matters, particularly the reform of the Security Council, are an important component of the Millennium Declaration and should be a legitimate focus of the discussion at the high-level plenary meeting next year.

In joining the consensus, my delegation welcomes and duly takes note of your assurance, Sir, that the draft resolution we are adopting today does indeed envisage a comprehensive review of the progress made in the fulfilment of all the commitments contained in the Millennium Declaration.

Mr. Drobnjak (Croatia): Croatia will join the consensus in adopting the draft resolution before us and has aligned itself with the statement of the European Union.

At the same time, my delegation would like to join those who have expressed their concern with the way the process of consultations has been conducted. The process so far has not been transparent or inclusive enough. We therefore hope that subsequent consultations on this important subject will be really open-ended, as stated in paragraph 3 of the draft resolution.

Mr. Al-Bader (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the Chairman of the Group of 77 — the Ambassador of Qatar, who is currently overseas on an official mission — and China, I take this opportunity to thank you most sincerely, Sir, for convening this meeting to adopt draft resolution A/58/L.8/Rev.1,

entitled "Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit and integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields".

This task has taken almost seven months to complete. That was necessary to give all member States adequate opportunity to participate in the process so that we could arrive at a consensus on the text of the draft resolution. Throughout the process, the Group of 77 and China exercised flexibility and accommodation to the many concerns that were raised by our partners during the negotiations. The text before us therefore takes into account the concerns of all member States and represents balanced and all-inclusive provisions and items on all issues and concerns that need to be addressed during the process leading to the 2005 high-level event.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all delegations that worked tirelessly with the Group of 77 and China to arrive at this text, which we recommend to the General Assembly for adoption by consensus. I thank you once again, Sir, for facilitating the process, which will make the adoption of the draft resolution possible. I also thank you for the kind words addressed to my delegation and to the Group of 77 and China.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/58/L.8/Rev.1, entitled "Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit and integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/58/L.8/Rev.1?

Draft resolution A/58/L.8/Rev.1 was adopted (resolution 58/291).

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda items 50 and 60.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items: request for the inclusion of an additional item

Note by the Secretary-General (A/58/236)

The President: As indicated in his note, the Secretary-General has the honour to request, pursuant to rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the inclusion in the agenda of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly of an additional item entitled "Financing of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti".

Owing to the nature of the item, unless there is an objection, may I take it that the General Assembly agrees that the relevant provision of rule 40 of the rules of procedure, which would require a meeting of the General Committee on the question of the inclusion of this item on the agenda, could be waived?

It was so decided.

The President: May I take it that the General Assembly, on the proposal of the Secretary-General, wishes to include in the agenda of the current session an additional item entitled "Financing of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti"?

It was so decided.

The President: The item is therefore included as item 168. In his note, the Secretary-General further requests that the item be allocated to the Fifth Committee. May I take it that the General Assembly, as requested by the Secretary-General, wishes to allocate this item to the Fifth Committee?

It was so decided.

The President: The Chairman of the Fifth Committee will be informed of the decision just taken.

I propose now to suspend the meeting to enable delegations to continue consultations on agenda item 38.

The meeting was suspended at 10.50 a.m. and resumed at 11.10 a.m.

Agenda item 38 (*continued*)

Question of Palestine

Draft resolution (A/58/L.61)

The President: Members will recall that the General Assembly held the debate on this item at its 65th and 66th plenary meetings, on 1 and 2 December

2003, and that the Assembly took action on four draft resolutions at its 68th plenary meeting, on 3 December.

I call on the Observer of Palestine.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like at the outset to express my sincere gratitude to you, Sir, for responding to the request to resume negotiations on the item entitled "Question of Palestine". We thank you for your long-standing wise leadership. I also wish to thank the sponsors of the draft resolution contained in document A/58/L.61, particularly the main sponsor, Malaysia. The draft resolution, as members know well, was initiated in a different manner under a different agenda item, relating to the report of the Credentials Committee.

(*spoke in English*)

The issue before the General Assembly today represents an important matter, legally and politically. In light of recent developments, it represents a necessary and basic affirmation by the international community of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to sovereignty over the Palestinian territory occupied by Israel since 1967, including East Jerusalem, and a rejection of any claims of Israeli sovereignty over that territory. In accordance with the rules and principles of international law — and this must be the fundamental basis upon which the international community addresses all issues and matters before it — those rights are constant and cannot be altered or voided with the passage of time or because of changes on the ground.

Such a clear affirmation by the Assembly has always been needed, but it has become more urgent in the light of recent attempts to confer legitimacy on and to entrench Israel's illegal expansionist designs and measures, including on some of its illegal settlements, in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. Moreover, as the text of the draft resolution before delegations states, the Assembly's action today is intended as a contribution to the attainment of a just and comprehensive negotiated peace settlement in the Middle East, resulting in two viable, sovereign and independent States, Israel and Palestine, based on the Armistice Line of 1949 and living side by side in peace and security.

Clearly, adherence to the basic rules and principles of international law, as well as to the Charter and the relevant United Nations resolutions, is imperative for the ultimate attainment of such a peace settlement. The Middle East peace process is founded on such principles and resolutions, and that must serve as the context within which a solution to this tragic conflict is found; it cannot be achieved in a vacuum, absent international law, and determined only by the grave imbalance of power.

The Palestinian side long ago took the historic decision necessary for the achievement of peace by accepting the existence of Israel and accepting a solution to the conflict based on two States along the Armistice Line of 1949, known also as the 1967 borders. Since then, the only reason for the continuation of the conflict, bloodshed and suffering has been Israel's effective rejection of that solution and its continuing occupation of, and expansionist designs on, the Palestinian territory it occupied in 1967, including East Jerusalem.

Israel, the occupying Power, has relentlessly colonized our land, continuously building and expanding its illegal colonial settlements on confiscated Palestinian land and attempting to unlawfully acquire by force even more of that land, including by the ongoing construction of its expansionist wall, which, far from being intended for security, is aimed at protecting and entrenching those illegal settlements: part and parcel of Israel's decades-long colonial campaign.

All of that has been carried out by Israel with impunity and with blatant contempt and disregard for international law and relevant United Nations resolutions as a result of the protection and encouragement accorded to it by a great Power and appeasement by others, allowing it to persist in, and even escalate, its unlawful policies and practices.

The occupying Power's pursuit of such illegal policies and practices has ensured the continued denial and violation of our national rights, including our right to self-determination and to the achievement of our independent State, Palestine. Even when the current Israeli Government agreed to the so-called vision of two States, it did so while still intending to illegally acquire more of our land and while still refusing to accept the existence of a truly sovereign and viable State of Palestine.

That is why Mr. Sharon's Government continues to pursue settlement activities and why it continues to construct the expansionist wall in the occupied

Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and to attempt the de facto annexation of more of our land. And that is why it continues with its measures to destroy the Palestinian Authority and continues to imprison and threaten the safety of the President of the Palestinian Authority and leader of the Palestinian people.

That is why it has continued with its reign of terror against the Palestinian people; war crimes and innumerable other violations of international law are being committed daily by the occupying Power as it continues to kill or wound civilians, including women and children, and to wantonly destroy Palestinian homes, property and land. That is why it has undermined or pre-empted all initiatives to end the disastrous situation that has prevailed over the past three years and why it has now come up with the so-called unilateral disengagement plan.

The issue is the land and the military occupation of that land for nearly 37 years. The issue is the land and the illegal expansionist designs of Israel at the expense of the Palestinian people and their rights. It is about Israel's refusal to end this occupation and its refusal to adhere to international law, instead seeking all the while to acquire more land by force and to eliminate more of the indigenous people as it carries out its unlawful and unjust policies and practices in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, without constraint.

Israel is doing that while it has not even resolved the issue of the ownership of land and property in Israel itself. There are 5.5 million dunams of land privately owned by Palestine refugees, all of which have been identified and registered by the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine. That ownership needs to be recognized by Israel, and, in accordance with international refugee law, its restitution must be an essential element of any settlement of the Palestine refugee problem. Those 5.5 million dunams represent almost half of the land of Israel, if we exclude the Negev desert. Indeed, the situation before us is starkly clear: not only has Israel taken over that privately-owned land instead of restoring it to its rightful Palestinian owners, but it also proceeds with the colonization of the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and with its attempts to annex large parts of that territory.

On 14 April, a disturbing and negative development took place in the form of an exchange of letters and assurances between Prime Minister Sharon of Israel and President Bush of the United States. The content of those letters violates international law as reaffirmed in numerous Security Council resolutions and violates the rights of the Palestinian people. It represents an attempt to confer legitimacy on some of Israel's illegal settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, to negate the rights of the Palestine refugees and to weaken international opposition to the catastrophic and unlawful expansionist wall. The content is also a departure from the terms of reference of the Middle East peace process and the United Nations resolutions and principles of international law within which the process is rooted. It is also a complete departure from the road map and its substance, as well as from the principle of achieving a peaceful settlement through negotiations between the two parties and of refraining from any actions that might pre-empt final status issues.

Even with regard to Gaza, the Israeli proposal, as reflected in the letters exchanged, falls far short of any real withdrawal, keeping control of international borders, airspace and water in the hands of the occupier and maintaining the so-called right to military intervention or attacks against Gaza. In sum, rather than actually being a real and complete withdrawal from Gaza, it is an attempt to seal Gaza off from the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory and the rest of the world and to finalize its transformation into a densely-packed prison for the more than 1.2 million Palestinians living there.

In light of all of this, it seemed that the road map could not be implemented and that the work of the Quartet would be extremely difficult to continue. Some, however, say that we might still have a chance to save the road map and that a real and complete withdrawal from Gaza might be an opportunity towards actually reviving it.

We would more than welcome the success of such an optimistic view, but for this to happen, several elements are required, including, first, the unqualified reaffirmation by the Quartet of commitment to the road map, including its terms of reference; and secondly, that any Israeli withdrawal, including from the Gaza Strip and the northern West Bank, be real, complete and non-reversible and that an international presence or monitoring mechanism be established as proposed. A

third essential element must be a reaffirmation of the necessity for a complete cessation of settlement activities and the cessation of the construction of the wall. This is, of course, a central requirement, without which positions will remain theoretical and might even represent a cover for Mr. Sharon's plans to illegally acquire large areas of the West Bank. With the wall, there can be no road map and, with the wall, there can be no hope for any peace. The wall makes the two-State solution both practically and physically impossible to attain and that is why the issue is now before the International Court of Justice — the most important development thus far in terms of a response by the international community to this grave violation and breach.

The outcome of the meeting of the Quartet two days ago on 4 May is welcome, although inconclusive. It was indeed significant that the Quartet reaffirmed its commitment to the road map and to the terms of reference for a negotiated peace settlement, including

> "Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003), the terms of reference of the Madrid peace process, the principle of land for peace, previous agreements and the initiative of Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah endorsed by the Beirut Arab League Summit."

With regard to Gaza, the Quartet affirmed the necessity of a full Israeli withdrawal and a complete end to the occupation in Gaza. This is also welcome, although it is not Sharon's intention in accordance with his unilateral disengagement plan and it remains to be seen how it will be actualized in terms of the clear position taken by the Quartet.

Unfortunately, at this stage, we cannot speak as positively about the third required element when it comes to the position taken by the Quartet. In this regard, we reiterate that the need for the complete cessation of all settlement activities, as well as the complete cessation of the building of the wall, must be clearly affirmed by the Quartet, for such cessation is essential to salvaging the road map and the two-State solution.

In sum, the outcome of the Quartet's meeting could serve as a good point for restarting the work of the Quartet. More work, however, is obviously needed to bring further clarity and to overcome the damage incurred in April. From our side, I wish to reiterate our commitment to implementing our obligations under the road map and to resuming negotiations at any time. At the same time, we also believe that it would be a good thing for the Quartet to involve the Security Council, considering its Charter authority and its responsibilities for the maintenance of international peace and security.

The choice now is between the rule of international law or attempts to impose a de facto illegal situation. It is between a real two-State solution — a real State of Palestine in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem — or the imprisonment of the Palestinian people in walled Bantustans on half of their land and then trying to call it a State. It is between a solution that achieves justice, albeit relatively, or a charade that can only lead to the continuation of violence and suffering. We choose — and we believe the international community chooses the same — the rule of international law and a genuine and viable two State solution. We choose justice and peace.

The President: I call on the representative of Malaysia to introduce draft resolution A/58/L.61.

Mr. Rastam (Malaysia): On 17 December 2003, Malaysia introduced, on behalf of 24 original co-sponsors, draft resolution A/58/L.48. We explained our reasons for doing so. This Assembly might recall that my delegation and the co-sponsors of the draft resolution at the time agreed not to insist on action being taken then and for the Assembly to defer consideration of the matter in order to allow for more time for wider and deeper consultations. Nevertheless, we expressed our intention to revisit the issue. We do so today in keeping with that intention. Therefore, I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/58/L.61, entitled "Status of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem", on behalf of Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, the Comoros, Cuba, Djibouti, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malaysia, Mauritania, Morocco, Namibia, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Somalia, South Africa, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen and Palestine.

The sponsors are confident that, following further discussions and very constructive consultations among delegations, the Assembly will be in a position to consider and adopt the draft resolution, as submitted under agenda item 38. In this connection, we wish to

express our sincere thanks to you, Sir, for convening this important meeting of the plenary to allow the General Assembly to consider the draft resolution. We also thank those delegations that have cooperated with the sponsors in producing the final text through their most valuable comments and suggestions.

The sponsors believe that they have adequately taken into consideration the concerns of all delegations. Very significant changes have been made to the draft that was originally introduced last December. The text of the present draft resolution is now clear. It is also concise. It seeks the reaffirmation by the international community of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to sovereignty over the Palestinian territory occupied by Israel since 1967, including East Jerusalem. It does not raise any extraneous questions, as some would claim. Issues concerning both credentials and representation have been dropped. The seventh preambular paragraph of the draft resolution clearly states the desire to contribute

> "to the achievement of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the attainment of a just and comprehensive negotiated peace settlement in the Middle East resulting in two viable, sovereign and independent States, Israel and Palestine, based on the Armistice Line of 1949 and living side by side in peace and security".

The draft resolution is now focused on a specific question: the status of the territory.

Draft resolution A/58/L.61 does not create new demands. Its contents are in keeping with all General Assembly and Security Council resolutions adopted thus far on the issue. The operative part affirms that Israel, the occupying Power, has no sovereignty over any part of the occupied territory. It also affirms that the Palestinian people have the right to self-determination and to sovereignty over the territory. That right to self-determination has been confirmed time and again by numerous United Nations resolutions.

It would be false to claim that the draft resolution seeks to pre-determine final status issues. The draft resolution addresses issues that both the General Assembly and the Security Council have pronounced themselves on. The Quartet reaffirmed on Tuesday, 4 May 2004, that

> "no party should take unilateral actions that seek to predetermine issues that can only be resolved through negotiation and agreement between the two parties".

The fact remains that the territory in question continues to be under Israeli occupation and that it is still subjected to severe policies and practices that have caused the Palestinian people tremendous grief and suffering. We must not confuse the issue. It is a fact that, for more than 35 years, Israel has been the only State in the United Nations that has been recognized by the Security Council as an occupying Power.

In a non-paper distributed two days ago, Israel claims that the draft resolution constitutes a violation of the principle of universality in the United Nations system and that it represents conspicuous discrimination against Israel. The sponsors find that to be most intriguing. Are we simply to ignore the fact that the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, has been universally recognized as occupied since 1967 and that it is indeed Israel that has refused to acknowledge that and has continued to defy international law and numerous Security Council and General Assembly resolutions?

We, the sponsors, maintain that the fact remains that the position on the issue has not been modified or altered by either the General Assembly or the Security Council. The fact also remains that, in the United Nations, the right to self-determination has been consistently reaffirmed as a basic principle in general and in relation to the Palestinian people in particular.

I wish to assure the General Assembly and all Member States that the draft resolution is not about the status or legitimacy of disputed legal and territorial claims. The sponsors are confident that it will not set a dangerous precedent for Member States with "territorial disputes" or "contested borders". The issue concerning the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, is not about a territorial dispute or contested borders. It is about military occupation; illegal settlements; illegal annexation and destruction of Palestinian lands, property and crops — including, I might add, thousands of olive trees; and the illegal expansionist wall. It is about commitment to peace achieved through a just and comprehensive negotiated settlement. In sum, it is simply about the status of the occupied Palestinian territory, including East

Jerusalem, in accordance with the rules and principles of international law.

In conclusion, allow me, on behalf of the sponsors, to commend draft resolution A/58/L.61 to the General Assembly for consideration and adoption today.

Mr. Alsaidi (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the delegation of Yemen and the Group of Arab States, allow me, Sir, to thank you for the wise manner in which you are conducting the deliberations of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session and for your efforts to strengthen the effectiveness of the United Nations in general and of the General Assembly in particular. In the light of recent developments in international relations, you responded favourably to our request to resume the Assembly's consideration of agenda item 38, "Question of Palestine". That reflects the international community's concern over Israeli practices that are undermining the peace process and leading the region towards ultimate disaster. Indeed, the fact that the Assembly has been convened is proof of the inevitability and urgency of this meeting, given the unbridled pace of developments in the occupied Palestinian territories.

The Security Council is unable to play its role of maintaining international peace and security in the occupied Palestinian territories. Today, as the territory undergoes shelling, firebombings, ambulance sirens, funerals and the persecution of Palestinian children, we are gathered here simply to reaffirm the role of the General Assembly — the organ that gives voice to the collective conscience and will of the international community and that, more than any other, embodies democracy in international relations.

No one is unaware that the Arab Group was about to introduce a draft resolution limited to the question of the representation of the occupied Palestinian territories. However, in the light of the swift developments in the situation on the ground, we have been compelled to draw the Assembly's attention to the status of the occupied Palestinian territories, which are facing threats that jeopardize the future of the peaceful settlement of the conflict.

The Prime Minister of Israel officially announced a plan to withdraw Israel's occupation forces from Gaza and declared that expansionist activities and settlements would be concentrated in the occupied West Bank. The fate of that plan is now vague, considering that the party in power has rejected it. Indeed, the plan reveals Israel's expansionist aims.

Israel's policy has been clear throughout its occupation of Palestinian territories since 1967. That policy is evidenced in Israel's continuous acquisition of territory, its expansionist settlements policy and, of late, the building of an expansionist wall, a wall that goes beyond the green line. That wall is yet another step along the path to Israel's annexation of new Palestinian territories.

For these reasons, it is clear today that Israel has always been more interested in seizing Palestinian land than in peace and security. It has always tried to impose new realities on the ground by changing the legal status of the occupied territories. This is a blatant attempt to flout international legitimacy. It is not the right path to security in the region. That will not change the actual reality, which is that Israel, under international law, is occupying Palestinian territory, and that it cannot exercise sovereignty over occupied territory.

Neither Israel nor any other party has the right to act on behalf of the Palestinian people with respect to final-status issues, because those should be the subject of negotiations between both parties, Palestinian and Israeli.

The Palestinian party, represented by its legitimate leadership, is the only one empowered to act in keeping with its national interests under international law and relevant resolutions of the United Nations. The international community stands united with respect to the principles and concepts that should govern any serious attempt to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict. Such an attempt must reflect the serious security concerns of Israel and the right of the Palestinians to freedom and to self-determination.

The Arab States, including the Palestinian Authority, have welcomed the road map. The road map represents a practical plan — the only plan that has international unanimous support, including that of Israel. Arab States as a whole also welcome the efforts of the Quartet. The Quartet reaffirmed in its statement made two days ago that the parties to the conflict should refrain from any unilateral action that could have an impact on the questions of borders or of refugees, because those questions should be settled on the basis of direct negotiations between the parties concerned and in the framework of the peace process;

all relevant resolutions, in particular Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003); the principle of land for peace; previous agreements between the various parties; and the initiative taken by His Highness Prince Abdullah, the Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which was endorsed at the Arab summit in Beirut.

Throughout the history of this Organization, the question of Palestine has brought into play the issue of the credibility of the Organization. Today this question represents a real challenge for anyone who believes in the rule of law and in the importance of the collective international will represented by multilateral organizations, including, of course, the United Nations.

Permit me to say very candidly that failure to implement United Nations resolutions on the Middle East is one of the reasons why the conflict has become worse, because this Organization has not been able to implement all of the numerous relevant resolutions on the Middle East.

Along the same lines, this Organization has not been able to translate into reality the principles and concepts embodied in those resolutions. The draft resolution that is before the Assembly today reflects the Assembly's continued interest in the tragedy of the Palestinian people. It states that it remains committed to a peaceful settlement, to which we all aspire.

To conclude, I should like, on behalf of the Arab Group, to invite the General Assembly to vote in favour of this draft resolution.

Mr. Gillerman (Israel): Let me take us all back just four days to show the real face of the people who are staging this charade here today. Only last Sunday, a pregnant Israeli mother and her four children, aged 2 to 11, were gunned down at point-blank range. After shooting the mother — eight months pregnant with a baby boy — the terrorists approached the vehicle and shot each of her four little girls in the head, just to ensure that they were dead.

Let me show the Assembly what I am talking about. This is the mother and her four little girls a few minutes before. These are their bodies a few hours later.

Members of Yasser Arafat's own Fatah-Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade and the Islamic Jihad proudly claimed responsibility for this heroic attack. There are reports of a rally planned in the streets controlled by the Palestinian Authority to celebrate it. As with the hundreds of terrorist attacks before it, not a single measure was taken by the Palestinian leadership to prevent that attack or to bring its perpetrators to justice. To any fair-minded observer, it should be obvious that the steadfast refusal of the Palestinian leadership to comply with its specific road map obligations to fight terrorism and to prevent, in the words of the road map, "all acts of violence against Israelis anywhere" (*S/2003/529, annex, p. 3*) is killing the peace process.

The Palestinian rejection of its obligations to take key reform measures to end corruption and the near-religious commitment to missing opportunities that could revitalize the peace process are by now notorious. Indeed, as is well known, the Palestinian side has still not taken on any of its primary first-phase obligations within the road map framework. Yet, we convene today not to address the massacre perpetrated against the Hatuel family or to condemn the Palestinian leadership for its involvement in those atrocities, but to consider the latest attempt by the Palestinian side to have the Assembly adopt yet another draft resolution that advances its partisan distorted agenda.

Just two days ago, the Quartet convened in this very building and issued an important statement on the Middle East peace process. Today the General Assembly has been asked to adopt a draft text that undermines that very statement. The statement issued by the Quartet — which includes, as members know, the United Nations itself, as well as the European Union, the United States and the Russian Federation — reaffirmed the basic principle that no party should take "unilateral actions that seek to predetermine issues that can only be resolved through negotiation and agreement". That principle is fundamental to the peace process and has been part of every peace agreement signed between the parties, as well as of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

The road map too, as the Quartet reaffirmed only 48 hours ago, specifically determines that permanent status issues are reserved for the final phase of negotiations between the parties. That principle was also recently reaffirmed by Israel in the context of the planned withdrawal from Gaza and parts of the West Bank. The Quartet, in its statement on Tuesday, took positive note of that plan and regarded it as a "rare moment of opportunity", recognizing that it has the potential to restart the road map process towards a

mutually agreed two-State solution, to which Israel remains committed. As Israel has demonstrated, even without a genuine partner in peace, we continue to seek ways to improve the situation and comply with our obligations, while protecting the security and basic right to life of our citizens.

For those who have taken the care to read the details of the plan, it is clear that it is completely consistent with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), with the road map and, indeed, with previous peace proposals. In the context of the plan, Israel reiterated its commitment to a negotiated solution to all permanent status issues within the context of the road map, and we do so again today. We recognize the principle that no permanent settlement can be imposed. It must be agreed by direct negotiations between the parties.

The obligation not to prejudge negotiations is born of the recognition that a lasting agreement benefiting both peoples can only come through mutual recognition and mutual compromise. No matter how many attempts are made by the Palestinian side to present the conflict as if it were black and white, with rights for Palestinians and responsibilities for Israelis, the truth remains that only a solution that takes the legitimate rights and obligations of both sides into account has a chance of success. It is worth reminding members that Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the terms of reference of the peace process were deliberately drafted to reflect that principle. Alternative proposals suggesting preordained answers or endorsing maximalistic territorial or legal claims were expressly rejected. The need for secure and defensible borders, arrived at by negotiation, was clearly recognized. Statements by the original drafters of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and, the Security Council's own records, as well as the plain text of signed agreements, clearly attest to that fact.

Indeed, the very agreement of the parties to resolve permanent status issues, such as borders and settlements, by negotiation, is testimony to the obligation to reach an agreed compromise. Compromise does not mean, as the Palestinian side occasionally proclaims, the agreement no longer to seek Israel's destruction. Compromise cannot be created by denying the historic and indigenous ties of the Jewish people to their ancient homeland any more than it can be reached by ignoring the legitimate claims of the Palestinian people. The history is complex. The legal positions are contested. This is the story of two peoples, not of one. As in other peace negotiations throughout the world and throughout history, demographic, strategic, political, humanitarian and security realities must also be taken into account to reach a fair and permanent settlement. This is a matter for more negotiations, not more resolutions. No amount of rhetoric or automatically generated General Assembly resolutions can alter the agreed terms of the peace process.

Despite those clear principles, the PLO is once again seeking to involve the General Assembly in final status issues. Just a few weeks ago, the Palestinian Observer addressed the Security Council, espousing the "principle of achieving a peaceful settlement through negotiations between the two parties and without prejudgement or pre-emption of final status issues" (*S/PV.4945, p. 4*). Today the Palestinian side returns to a more familiar pattern, as it has done for decades. It seeks, once again, to push a one-sided draft resolution through the United Nations that attempts to influence the negotiating process.

The draft resolution presented today presumes to have the Assembly — a political body — determine the disputed legal status of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and the legitimacy of conflicting claims, to the benefit of one party to the conflict and outside the agreed negotiating process. Like the other draft resolutions before it, this draft resolution shares the same substantive intent of predetermining issues expressly reserved for negotiations. Once again, the Palestinian side seeks to approach the General Assembly to cause it to embrace its maximalistic position, rather than negotiate with its neighbour on the basis of a commitment to end terrorism and renew genuine dialogue. It is simply not possible — it is impossible — to support the principles that were affirmed by the Quartet while at the same time countenancing repeated Palestinian initiatives at the United Nations that cut across those very principles.

The contradiction is obvious. The hypocrisy cries out. And the detriment to the legitimacy and influence of the General Assembly on the issue is, unfortunately, equally clear. For more than 80 States involved in territorial conflicts or with contested borders, the damaging precedent created by that kind of resolution is also clear. Using the organs of the United Nations to circumvent an agreed negotiating process, or to

advance the positions of one side of a conflict, is harmful both to the prospects of peace and to the credibility of the United Nations. States supporting that approach do so to the detriment of both those key interests.

Already, a clearly disproportionate amount of United Nations time and resources is devoted each annual session to partisan Palestinian initiatives and resolutions that consistently seek to bypass the negotiating process. Those texts have done nothing to advance peace, but they have done a great deal to harm the reputation of the United Nations and to undermine efforts to re-energize the negotiating process.

We believe it is past time for a different approach. The Assembly should start looking for constructive ways to encourage the parties to move towards road map implementation. It should stop endorsing even more divisive and controversial texts, under whatever guise, that seek to influence the outcome of a territorial dispute that the parties themselves have agreed to resolve by negotiation.

The draft resolution presented today offers us no way forward. It contains none of the key elements raised in the Quartet statement, and it undermines a central tenet of the peace process itself reaffirmed by the Quartet. It pretends that law and justice are within the monopoly of one side to the conflict. It misrepresents the true legal status of the 1949 Armistices Line and contradicts the terms of reference of the peace process. It is ill-timed, counterproductive and sends precisely the wrong message. It offers the Palestinian side an incentive to avoid negotiations and compliance with their obligations. After all, why bother with those difficult responsibilities, why fight terrorism, when the General Assembly is offering to embrace attempts to circumvent the negotiations and is determined to withhold any form of admonition for ongoing Palestinian violations that continue to take innocent lives on both sides?

The Palestinian Observer will no doubt, as usual, for lack of solid logic and moral grounding, accuse me again here today of low-level language. So it is important for us all to remember that beyond the diplomatic language that we all use lies a simple truth. It is time to tell the Palestinians, "Enough is enough. Stop the killings. Stop the terror. Do what you have to do to clean house, and stop abusing our time and the limited resources of the United Nations on resolutions that ignore the genuine suffering on both sides and instead promote initiatives of trivial pursuit."

We urge Member States that really care about a lasting peace and that support the Quartet Statement issued just two days ago to firmly oppose this counterproductive draft resolution.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Senegal, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

Mr. Badji (Senegal) (Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People) (*spoke in French*): As Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and on behalf of all members of the Committee, I would like to express our views on the agenda item on the question of Palestine, and specifically on the status of the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem. As members are aware, for more than 37 years, Israel has been occupying Palestinian territory, in flagrant violation of many United Nations resolutions and the founding principles of the Charter of our Organization, including the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force.

For several decades, the international community has tirelessly worked to put an end to the occupation and to find a lasting solution to the question of Palestine. It has firmly supported the vision of two States living side by side in shared peace and security. Alongside the State of Israel there must exist a viable, independent and sovereign Palestinian State. That vision has been clearly set forth in the road map, as accepted by both the Israelis and the Palestinians.

Clearly, any final settlement of the issue of the borders between the two States must be the subject of an agreement between the two parties involved. But as a people, the Palestinians have a fundamental right to self-determination, including the right to exercise sovereignty over their own territory in accordance with the rules and principles of international law. However, it is distressing to note that that fundamental and inalienable right has thus far been denied them. The Israeli Government continues its occupation of Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, by making use of brutal military force, confiscation of land, moving Israeli nationals into settlements in

Palestinian territory and by building a separation wall on Palestinian land in the West Bank.

The same Government continues to systematically deal destructive blows to the institutions of the Palestinian Authority and its leadership by besieging the President of the Palestinian Authority, President Yasser Arafat, who is confined in the Muqata'a, his headquarters, in Ramallah.

The disproportionate use of force by the occupying Power against Palestinian civilians continues relentlessly. In addition, the severe restrictions on the movements of the Palestinian populations on their own land stifles social and economic activities and threatens to delay a negotiated settlement to the conflict, which has lasted far too long.

The Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, is illegal from the standpoint of international law. Since it has no sovereignty over any part of the Palestinian territory, Israel cannot be the representative of the territory. For that reason, the credentials of the Israeli delegation to the United Nations must not include the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem.

Adoption of the draft resolution proposed for adoption by the Assembly would at least clarify the issue of the legitimate representation of the Palestinian people in the United Nations and would thus represent another step towards the exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights. In addition, adoption of the draft resolution should not be perceived as having a direct bearing on the ongoing peace process, on the final-status negotiations or on issues such as borders and refugees.

With respect to addressing the question of Palestine, the United Nations has a permanent responsibility to ensure a final settlement of the issue in all its aspect in accordance with international legitimacy and legality.

Thus, as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I should like to appeal to all States to support draft resolution A/58/L.61/Rev.1, entitled "Status of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem". Its adoption would represent yet another milestone in the recovery of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, which is the principal goal of our Committee and, I am convinced, the hope of the entire international community. Faced with challenges and growing perils, the Committee sincerely hopes that the international community will continue to mobilize its efforts to provide a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the painful question of Palestine.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): The question of Palestine is today at an extremely important and sensitive juncture — as sensitive and critical a juncture as that in 1947 when the General Assembly adopted its resolution to partition Palestine into two States for two peoples: one for the Israelis and the other for the Palestinians.

Today, the General Assembly is considering once again the question of the Palestinian State and the right of the Palestinian people to sovereignty over the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, falling within the armistice line of 1949. The General Assembly is called upon once again today to decide the matter clearly and precisely, consistent with international law and previous resolutions of international legality. It can do so by rejecting the claims of the occupying Power that the occupied Palestinian territories are disputed and negotiable. It must reaffirm that all the rules governing the treatment of occupied territories and their populations, in accordance with the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Times of War, are applicable to those territories occupied since 1967. Full withdrawal therefrom, including from East Jerusalem, must be undertaken.

Today, we must reiterate the right of the Palestinians to their independent State on the Palestinian territories, fully restored and under Palestinian sovereignty. That would help move the process forward towards a negotiated settlement of the conflict that would achieve the goal of two States living side by side in peace and security within secure borders, in accordance with the road map.

The international community, as represented by this Assembly, is called upon today to reaffirm yet again the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition or settlement of the lands of others through the use of military force and of the building, on the pretext of security concerns, of fences and walls in the depths of the Palestinian territories, representing a thinly disguised attempt to expropriate the Palestinians' lands and to compel them to live in walled Bantustans.

The General Assembly must today defend the occupied peoples and their right to self-determination and to live in peace and security. We are confident that the international community will be firm in its defense of the principles of international law, the Charter of the United Nations, this great Organization, and the right of all to peace and security.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my pleasure, on behalf of the Syrian Arab Republic, to thank you, Sir, for convening this meeting and for resuming the discussion of the item on the question of Palestine. I also wish to thank the countries of the world for their ongoing principled support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and its efforts to establish a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, which must include an end to Israel's occupation of Arab territories in the Syrian Golan Heights, Southern Lebanon and Palestine. Such a peace would also curb Israel's arrogance, violations of international law and perpetration of war crimes.

This meeting is being held in the context of ongoing efforts and firm positions adopted by the General Assembly in support of one of the world's most just causes and in the midst of new challenges and grave threats faced by the Palestinian people as a result of Israel's policies of terrorism, oppression, murder and destruction, unprecedented in the history of humankind. The extreme urgency of this meeting and the submission of the draft resolution on the status of the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, arises from the fact that this international forum has been addressing the tragedy of the Palestinian people since its very birth. It has issued hundreds of resolutions that have been integrated into international law and terms of reference that cannot be ignored in our collective effort to find a solution to the problem of the Palestinian people, millions of whom have been expelled by Israel from their lands and homes and have endured a loathsome Israeli occupation of their land and a denial of their fundamental rights of return, self-determination, and the establishment of an independent State on their own land.

The Arab Group's call for the convening of this important meeting is most timely. It arises from our conviction that the international community must stand up to the Israeli policy of devouring of Palestinian rights and lands under flimsy pretexts that have been exposed to all. Israel is undertaking a colonial occupation and unlawful annexation of the Palestinian territories that it has occupied since 1967. It has also illegally transferred immigrants to those territories with a view to altering the demographic composition of the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem in particular. These measures have led to Israel's acquisition of approximately 42 per cent of the Palestinian territories, despite the objections of the international community, reflected in many Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

The humanitarian crisis facing the Palestinian people has also escalated because of Israel's building of the expansionist wall on occupied Palestinian territories, its confiscation of land and its isolation of Palestinian cities and villages. This has led to a deterioration of the already desperate economic and social situation in the occupied Palestinian territories and has deepened the feeling of disappointment and despair among the Palestinian people.

According to information provided by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Israel, as of 27 January last, had demolished more than 14,825 homes in the refugee camps in the Gaza Strip. Since February last, Israel has also demolished thousands of homes, whose former inhabitants have become refugees, with no roof over their head to protect them from the cold of winter.

Israel is carrying out its policy of assassination in total disregard of international law, protests and treaties. In doing so, it uses rockets and tank missiles against an unarmed population that aspires only to live in peace and dignity in an independent State.

United Nations statistics indicate that about 3,000 innocent Palestinians, including more than 300 children, have been killed by Israel in the past two years. Israel's insistence on continuing to perpetrate such crimes can be described only as a war crime and a crime against humanity. The international community must put an end to the perpetration of such crimes. Their escalation now poses a real threat to international peace and security.

The draft resolution that is before us today on the status of the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, is clear and accurate. The adoption of this draft would reflect the international community's determination to see the Palestinian people exercise their right to self-determination and sovereignty over

their land, including East Jerusalem. It would also represent a rejection of any claims or attempts by Israel to annex territory.

The international community must reject any attempt to legitimize Israel's expansionist plans and its aggressive acts against the occupied Arab territories, including its settlements or the so-called facts on the ground.

It is very important to understand that the question of the occupied Arab territories, be they in the Syrian Golan, southern Lebanon or Palestine, cannot be negotiated between the parties. That land is occupied land, and it must be restored to its owners. For the past 37 years, Israel has continued to build settlements and to take decisions aimed at annexing land and establishing so-called facts on the ground, with a view to eventually imposing new concepts on the international community — concepts that are in contravention of international law.

Security Council resolution 242 (1967) reiterates the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force and called for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Arab lands occupied since 1967. The Security Council, in its resolution 476 (1980), condemned Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem. In its resolution 497 (1981), the Council condemned Israel's alleged annexation of the occupied Syrian Golan. These resolutions must be respected by Israel, which must not disregard or attempt to circumvent that legally binding resolution.

The Israeli Government — especially the current one, which is against peace — is under the illusion that through its manoeuvres, its threats, its unjust occupation and blackmail, it will eventually achieve the successful imposition of a fait accompli on the Arab peoples. Such a fait accompli is but the continuation of occupation, but Israel is once again mistaken. Its gamble will not succeed — that much is clear.

Syria and other Arab countries are determined to liberate their lands occupied by Israel. They are determined to achieve a comprehensive and just peace. Everyone knows that the Arab side is sincere in its pursuit of peace on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the Madrid terms of reference, the principle of land for peace and the Arab initiative for peace, adopted at the Beirut Summit in 2002. That initiative had widespread support from the international community and its major institutions.

In conclusion, we firmly believe that strong support for this draft resolution will be another important step towards saving our region from the scourge of the occupation, brutal force, the settlements and the imposition of a policy of fait accompli, and that it will promote our collective efforts to achieve a comprehensive and just peace in our region.

Mr. Requeijo Gual (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Cuba is among the sponsors of draft resolution A/58/L.61, entitled "Status of the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem", which is before us at an extremely complex time. Plans are not being implemented, negotiations are not advancing, Security Council resolutions are not being implemented, and resolutions of the General Assembly and of other organs of the United Nations system are being flouted with disdain.

In the midst of so many press conferences, statements, drafts and initiatives, we cannot overlook the nature of the crisis that has ravaged the Middle East, in particular with respect to the question of Palestine, practically since the creation of our Organization. Humankind has an obligation to the Palestinian people to ensure that they are able to exercise self-determination and to establish on their territory the independent and sovereign State for whose sake they have had to endure so much pain and suffering.

The media campaigns that distort the reality of the situation of the Palestinian people cannot make us forget about the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force. We cannot forget about the need to realize the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. We cannot forget about the need to take the road towards a peaceful, negotiation, just and comprehensive settlement in the Middle East. We cannot forget about the goal of two neighbouring States coexisting in conditions of peace and security, with mutual trust and full viability, sovereignty and independence.

Aggression against the Palestinian people and other Arab peoples must cease. All illegal settlements in occupied territories must be dismantled and given to their legitimate owners. Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan must stop.

Not only must the building of the wall of separation within the occupied Palestinian territories stop, but what has already been built must be demolished without conditions or pretexts. We must not wait for those new physical alterations in the occupied Palestinian territories to further complicate possible future negotiations on permanent status; nor must the Palestinian territory's contiguity in Gaza and the West Bank be affected.

For progress to be made, there must be an end to State terrorism, extrajudicial executions, the destruction of houses and fields, arbitrary detentions, torture, the stifling of the Palestinian economy and the uncontrolled spiral of violence that claims the lives of innocent civilians on both sides. We cannot forget the situation of Palestinian refugees and their right to return to the land from which they were expelled. And, last but not least, we must respect the leadership of the Palestinian National Authority and its legitimate representation of the Palestinian people.

Cuba hopes that the day is not far off when we will be able to welcome into the Organization, as a full Member, with full prerogatives, a free and independent Palestinian State that is free from the Israeli military occupation it has endured since 1967 and that enjoys full sovereignty throughout its territory. Only then will there be peace, security, respect and harmony in the Middle East. Until that time comes, we must keep the legal status of the occupied Palestinian territory well defined. In that connection, we call on Member States to vote in favour of the draft resolution before us today.

Mr. Cunningham (United States of America): The United States will vote against the draft resolution (A/58/L.61) being considered here today. The United States believes that the draft resolution before us is inappropriate and ill-timed, and that it would detract from, rather than enhance, ongoing efforts to bring about a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The Quartet principals met here in this building just two days ago. After their meeting, they issued a clear statement affirming their commitment to a common vision of two States — Israel and a viable, democratic, sovereign and contiguous Palestine — living side by side in peace and security. The Quartet also called on both parties to fulfil their obligations under the road map — as called for in Security Council resolution 1515 (2003) and in previous Quartet statements — and to meet the commitments they made at the Red Sea summits in Aqaba and Sharm el-Sheik.

The Quartet noted that no party should take unilateral actions that seek to predetermine issues that can only be resolved through negotiation and agreement between the two parties. Any final settlement on issues such as borders and refugees must be mutually agreed to by Israelis and Palestinians on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003), the terms of reference of the Madrid peace process, the principle of land for peace, previous agreements, and the initiative of Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah endorsed by the Beirut Arab League Summit, and must be consistent with the road map.

This draft resolution flies in the face of that statement. It is a unilateral action that, no matter how it is worded, attempts to prejudge the final status issues of borders and Jerusalem by asserting the right of Palestinian sovereignty and independence in all of the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. It is a detour and a distraction.

At this critical juncture, the international community must remain focused on how to resume progress towards peace. Progress will come only through a real commitment by the parties to engage constructively and to implement their obligations under the road map. That is what the Quartet is focused on, and that is what the international community should be focused on. Neither the General Assembly nor anyone else should prejudice the outcome of permanent status negotiations. A lasting settlement can be reached only through direct negotiations and mutual agreement between the parties. As Secretary Powell stated after the Quartet meeting in New York, President Bush's exchange of letters with Prime Minister Sharon reaffirmed that the parties have to mutually agree between themselves before any issues are settled in final status negotiations.

The draft resolution before the General Assembly prejudges final status issues; is inconsistent with the Quartet's statement, previous resolutions and agreements between the parties; and detracts from the real efforts being made to resume progress towards peace in the region. The United States will vote against the draft resolution, and we urge other Member States to vote against it as well.

The President: We have heard the last speaker on my list for this meeting.

Before adjourning, I would like to give the floor to the representative of Malaysia to explain the status of negotiations.

Mr. Rastam (Malaysia): On behalf of the sponsors of draft resolution A/58/L.61, I should like to inform the Assembly that, as a result of further consultations this morning, the sponsors would like to submit a revised text for adoption this afternoon. We have been in touch with the Secretariat, which is making arrangements for the revised text to be circulated. I believe the English text has been informally circulated in the room, and we will make the text available to all delegations.

We would like to thank you, Mr. President, and the rest of the Assembly for the opportunity to put the revised draft resolution to the vote this afternoon. There is also a possibility that a few more countries will join the list of sponsors.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.

United Nations A/58/PV.87

General Assembly
Fifty-eighth session

Official Records

87th plenary meeting
Thursday, 6 May 2004, 3.30 p.m.
New York

President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte ..... (Saint Lucia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.35 p.m.

Agenda item 38 (*continued*)

Question of Palestine

Draft resolution (A/58/L.61/Rev.1)

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Malaysia to introduce a revised draft resolution on this item (A/58/L.61/Rev.1.

Mr. Rastam (Malaysia): As I informed the General Assembly this morning, the sponsors of draft resolution A/58/L.61 have made some revisions to the text following further consultations and in keeping with the spirit of cooperation and compromise in multilateral negotiations. The revised text is contained in document A/58/L.61/Rev.1. I believe the text is available in all languages and it has been distributed to all delegations.

Allow me to point out the revisions made to the text. First, the sixth preambular paragraph has been shortened to make reference to the need to enable the Palestinian people to exercise sovereignty in general. Secondly, operative paragraph 1 now makes reference to "relevant resolutions of the United Nations, including Security Council resolutions", and the words "their territory" replace the previous wording, "this territory". Additionally, the paragraph makes reference to the duties and obligations of Israel as an occupying Power under the Fourth Geneva Convention and the Hague Convention of 1907.

Thirdly, the last preambular paragraph of A/58/L.61 has now been made into operative paragraph 2 in the revised text, with the words "pre-1967 borders" replacing the words "Armistice Line of 1949".

The sponsors of draft resolution A/58/L.61/Rev.1 would like to thank our partners, in particular the members of the European Union, for their cooperation and support. We hope that with these revisions the Assembly will be able to adopt this draft resolution by an overwhelming majority.

The President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/58/L.61/Rev.1.

Before giving the floor to delegations wishing to speak in explanation of vote before the vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Pamir (Turkey): The Assembly is on the verge of taking another decision on the Palestinian question, which lies at the core of the conflict in the Middle East. The Turkish delegation aligns itself with the statement of the European Union (EU).

Given Turkey's deeply rooted historical, cultural and traditionally friendly ties with all the countries and peoples of the Middle East, I am taking the floor to explain some considerations that shape our position today. In our view, draft resolution A/58/L.61/Rev.1 is

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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the outcome of recent initiatives and developments in the region. It is indicative of the extremely crucial issues which are at stake.

The final status negotiations are to be conducted directly between the Palestinians and the Israelis. Those negotiations are designed to settle the core issues between the parties, which are defined in relevant United Nations resolutions and are commonly accepted by the international community. The parties should desist from any unilateral actions or moves that have the potential to cause further deterioration in the situation on the ground.

We shall cast our vote in favour based on the understanding that the draft resolution should in no way be construed as constituting a basis for prejudging the parties with regard to final status negotiations. Final settlement issues must be mutually agreed by the parties through peaceful negotiations, based on the relevant Security Council resolutions, including the principle of land for peace, as well as subsequent agreements reached between the two parties.

Turkey strongly supports the Quartet road map and the most recent statement of the Quartet, of 4 May, along with other initiatives that may guide the parties to reach a final settlement based on the vision of two States living side by side within secure and recognized boundaries. We stand ready, as we have in the past, to assist all the parties to reach a peaceful and final settlement.

Mr. Smirnov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The text of the draft resolution before us does not conflict with international legal instruments regarding the final settlement of the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis. The basis for such a settlement, recently reaffirmed at the ministerial meeting of the Quartet of international mediators on the Middle East, is formed by Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2001) and 1515 (2003). The latter was adopted at the initiative of the Russian Federation, and in it the international community recognized the road map as the key instrument for settling the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The Quartet has strongly rejected any actions that run counter to the road map; any initiatives at this stage should be in keeping with the Quartet peace plan and should lead to the end of the occupation of Palestinian territory.

Russia expects that the Palestinians and the Israelis will implement fully their commitments under the road map. All Israeli actions against civilians must end, and the Israeli side must take no steps that would prejudge final status, use force or contravene international humanitarian law.

A political settlement should lead to the establishment of two equal States living in peace with each other. There should be no doubt that any political settlement will remain mere words unless it is implemented through the collective efforts of the Quartet, whose representatives will soon return to the region to resume work with the parties to implement the decisions of the New York Quartet meeting.

Russia's position has not changed: we believe that the entire range of final status issues — refugees, territorial disengagement and East Jerusalem — must be resolved on the basis of mutual consent by the parties themselves through negotiations. That is why the Russian delegation will vote in favour of draft resolution A/58/L.61/Rev.1.

Mr. Ryan (Ireland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union reaffirms its commitment to a negotiated two-State solution, agreed between the parties, which would result in a viable, contiguous, sovereign and independent Palestinian State existing side by side in peace with an Israel living within recognized and secure borders. The Union reaffirms its belief that the road map represents the only route to achieving such an outcome. The Union is determined to pursue vigorously the course set out in the road map and calls on both sides to fulfil their obligations under the road map.

The European Union recalls its established position, restated by the European Council on 25 and 26 March, that the Union will not recognize any changes to the pre-1967 borders other than those arrived at by agreement between the parties. The Union emphasizes that no declared views on the possible

shape of a final settlement can pre-empt the negotiation of that settlement.

The European Union also notes that the refugee question and the manner in which the right of return may be realized also constitute a final status issue and that the road map states that a final and comprehensive permanent status agreement that ends the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must include an agreed, just, fair and realistic solution to that question.

The European Union emphasizes the principle that final status issues are a matter for negotiation and agreement between the parties themselves and must not be prejudged.

The European Union notes that secure and recognized borders should emerge from negotiations between the parties in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Those and other relevant Security Council resolutions must form the basis for a just and lasting settlement of the conflict.

The European Union welcomes the prospect of Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. The European Council has stated that such a withdrawal could represent a significant step towards the implementation of the road map, provided that it is carried out in accordance with certain conditions. This is an opportunity which the international community, led by the Quartet, should seize. The proposed withdrawal should be properly orchestrated with the international community so as to ensure that an orderly situation in Gaza results, which will permit the maintenance of security as well as rehabilitation and reconstruction. The Union urges all parties to undertake urgently preparations towards that end.

On that basis, the European Union reiterates its readiness to support the Palestinian Authority in taking responsibility for law and order as well as to continue the Union's existing aid to the Palestinian Authority and to examine possible future needs which may arise in the context of a new situation in Gaza. The Union stresses the need to avoid a political vacuum and the dangers which that would involve in the interim period between now and the beginning of any withdrawal. It recalls that there are a number of measures which need to be adopted in the period immediately ahead in the political, security and humanitarian spheres in order to prevent further deterioration and to resume progress.

The European Union urges an end to violence and terrorism as well as the resumption of a ceasefire embracing all parties and groups. It calls on both sides to resume negotiations on the peace process without further delay.

The European Union recalls that a just, lasting and comprehensive peace must meet the legitimate aspirations of both the Israeli and the Palestinian peoples and must include Lebanon and Syria.

The European Union also calls on all States in the region to exert every effort to promote peace and to combat terrorism.

The European Union welcomes the outcome of the Quartet meeting held in New York on 4 May. The European Union underscores its commitment to work actively within the Quartet in pursuing the goal of a comprehensive regional peace and to encourage the parties to move ahead vigorously on the basis of the principles just outlined.

The European Union has decided to support the draft resolution, as it is consistent with European Union positions.

Mr. Balarezo (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Peru considers this to be a subject of utmost importance; naturally, it supports the peace process and the road map. It awaits the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the attainment of a negotiated, just and comprehensive peace agreement in the Middle East. We hope to see the two States, Palestine and Israel, living peacefully within secure borders.

However, there is a procedural point which is the reason why Peru must abstain in the vote on draft resolution A/58/L.61/Rev.1. I am referring not just to the fact of the failure to respect the 24-hour rule and the failure to distribute the draft resolution in all languages, but also to the fact that we have to confront a fluid situation. We have to react very quickly to a text that was negotiated not necessarily in the most transparent manner. Not all delegations — and this is the case of Peru — are able to react in this type of situation. It is due to those circumstances — related not to the content but rather to the process — the Peruvian delegation will abstain. Of course, Peru is not among those countries that are prepared to paralyze a process of such importance, because we consider it is truly of great importance.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote before the vote.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/58/L.61/Rev.1, entitled "Status of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem". A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Algeria, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Canada, Central African Republic, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Paraguay, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia

Against:

Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, United States of America

Abstaining:

Australia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru, Serbia and Montenegro, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu

Draft resolution A/58/L.61/Rev.1 was adopted by 140 votes to 6, with 11 abstentions (resolution 58/292).

[*Subsequently, the delegation of Turkmenistan informed the Secretariat that it had intended to vote in favour.*]

The President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote after the vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Gallegos Chiriboga (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation wishes to make the following explanation of vote in connection with the draft resolution that has just been put to the vote.

Ecuador maintains its traditional position of encouraging a peaceful and negotiated settlement of the Middle East question, in the light of the resolutions adopted by the Security Council in that regard, taking into account the rights of the Palestinian and Israeli peoples in the framework of international law.

For that reason, it expresses its full support for Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003), as those resolutions constitute the legal and political framework for the re-establishment of the peace negotiations. Ecuador recognizes Israel's right to live in peace within secure and recognized borders within the framework of international law, as well as the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to build their own State, in accordance with United Nations resolutions. For that reason, the Government of Ecuador, in keeping with what has been the constant policy of the Ecuadorian State, will continue to support United Nations efforts to seek a peaceful and negotiated solution to the Palestinian-Israeli problem which maintains the rights of both peoples, in accordance with international law.

Bearing in mind the fact that draft resolution A/58/L.61/Rev.1 is consistent with principles that

Ecuador has supported in the international arena, such as the self-determination of peoples and the rejection of occupation and annexation of territory by force, my delegation voted in favour of it.

Mr. Rock (Canada): Canada regrets to see the addition of yet another resolution to an already lengthy list of resolutions on the Middle East. Canada firmly supports Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002), including the requirement of Israeli withdrawal from territories occupied in 1967.

Canada also supports both the full realization of the legitimate right of Palestinians to self-determination and to the creation of a Palestinian State through direct negotiations between the parties, leading to a just, comprehensive and sustainable peace, and the vision of a region where there are two States — Israel and a Palestinian State — living side by side within secure and recognized borders. In our view, while the international community can provide essential support for their efforts, final status issues can be resolved only through a negotiated settlement between the parties. In that regard, we welcome the statement made by the members of the Quartet on 4 May.

Mr. Matsuura (Japan): Japan voted in favour of resolution 58/292. The position of the Japanese Government on the Middle East issue is that peace should be sought in accordance with the road map and that final status, including borders, should be resolved strictly through negotiations between the parties.

Mr. Gillerman (Israel): Israel objected to this futile resolution not because we oppose a negotiated two-State solution to the conflict, as envisaged in the road map, but because we support it. We objected to this resolution because of what it ignores, because of what it misrepresents and because the motive of its primary sponsor in submitting this text was to undermine and prejudge the negotiating process, not to further it.

This resolution totally ignores the Quartet statement made two days ago and violates the central tenet of the peace process, reiterated in the Quartet statement: to avoid prejudging the outcome of negotiations. If borders and settlements are expressly reserved as a matter for negotiations, how can it be that the Assembly should presume to affirm rights and express positions on the conflicting claims of the parties? There is a clear contradiction between the Quartet statement and this resolution, and, in that regard, the failure of the resolution to even refer to the Quartet statement issued just 48 hours ago is a telling sign.

The resolution blatantly misrepresents reality. It is a simple matter of fact and of law that the 1949 Armistice Lines have never represented and do not now represent borders, as this resolution can be taken mistakenly to imply. That is precisely why Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and every other agreed term of reference for the peace process have affirmed that secure and defensible borders are a matter for negotiation, not for predetermined answers.

Perhaps worst of all, this resolution once again sends the message to the Palestinian side that their failure to live up to their responsibilities will have no impact on the General Assembly. The longer the Assembly continues to pander to these self-serving initiatives and avoid the hard issues, the more it will continue to undermine the very negotiating process it claims to promote, and in the process harm its own reputation and claim to legitimacy.

Let us not pretend that, as some speakers have claimed, this political body is engaged in dispassionate legal analysis. This body, which brought us the Zionism-is-racism resolution, condemned the peace agreement between Israel and Egypt and introduced many other farcical texts on the Middle East, has not been famous of late for its objectivity regarding this conflict.

If this text or any other of the countless Palestinian texts were genuinely concerned with legal principle, we would have seen long ago a condemnation of the legal support and complicity of the Palestinian leadership and other regimes in the region in the murder of innocent civilians. We would have seen a concern for the human rights of Israelis, not just of Palestinians. And we would have heard calls for the Palestinian leadership to finally pursue the welfare of their own people rather than siphon donor money for their personal corrupt prosperity.

Let us also not pretend that all the evils of the conflict can be blamed on occupation, as the Palestinian Observer is so intent on marketing. If this conflict were just about occupation, a Palestinian State would have been created between 1948 and 1967. If this conflict were just about occupation, then Yasser Arafat would not have rejected the two-State solution

in favour of a campaign of terrorism of the most brutal kind. And if this conflict were just about occupation, Israelis would not get the message we get every time a suicide bomber massacres innocent civilians with the blessing and complicity of the Palestinian leadership. The message broadcast loud and clear from all of this is a continuing rejection of the right of the Jewish people to self-determination in their ancient homeland, side by side with their Palestinian and Arab neighbours.

If we are serious about solving the conflict, we cannot avoid mutual recognition and mutual compromise. This resolution is about the precise opposite. It is about maximalist claims and ignoring the rights of the other side. It is about claiming a monopoly over law, rights and victimhood. It continues the recipe of failure.

Israel is ready, and has been for a long time, to recognize the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination in a State of their own, side by side with Israel, as envisaged in the road map. Is the Palestinian side willing to affirm today, or any day, the right of the Jewish people to self-determination in their ancient homeland? Is it willing to educate its people and the region about that right and to act accordingly? In all the statements made by the Palestinian Observer, we have never heard those simple words of peace and reconciliation. I wonder if we ever will.

Mr. Paolillo (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Uruguay decided to vote in favour of the resolution that we have just adopted because we believe that its content simply reiterates the principles and conclusions already adopted by the General Assembly and other United Nations bodies. Thus, the resolution does not in any way prejudge the basis, principles or outcome of the Middle East peace process.

We also believe that by adopting the resolution, the General Assembly is helping encourage the two parties to this long conflict to shoulder their responsibilities once and for all, and to embark on the peace process in order to arrive as soon as possible at a just and comprehensive settlement in the Middle East.

In addition, I wish to note that in our consideration of the draft resolution, a procedure was followed that, unfortunately, has been used repeatedly. Indeed, this is not the first time that many members of the Assembly are in the position of having to consider, and take a position on a draft resolution, when the final draft text has been circulated only a few hours before its being put to the vote. That does not allow enough time to examine the content and the consequences with due care. Sometimes there even is not enough time to consult with our capitals.

In such cases, the draft resolutions are almost always negotiated among the sponsors and certain groups of countries. Large sectors of the Assembly are left out of those negotiations. Thus, when an agreement is reached it is logical that those involved in the negotiations are not taken by surprise and that they are entirely ready to vote.

But it seems unfair to oblige the many States that have not been invited to participate in the negotiations to take a decision on texts of which they have become aware just a few hours previously. We see in that process an attitude of disdain for such States on the part of those who press for the speedy adoption of draft resolutions that have not been distributed far enough in advance. We hope that this process will not recur in the future.

Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): Guatemala abstained in the vote on draft resolution A/58/L.61/Rev.1 because it is our understanding, in spite of the constructive amendments made to the original texts, that it touches on subjects which, pursuant to Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), are to be resolved through negotiations between the parties as final status issues.

Nonetheless, we reiterate our commitment to the right of self-determination of the Palestinian people, and we resolutely share the vision of a region in which two viable, sovereign and independent States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side in conditions of peace, harmony and security.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote after the vote. I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of Palestine.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): We would like to express our sincere and profound thanks to all States Members of the United Nations that supported today's resolution. We thank in particular the sponsors of the resolution, including Malaysia, and the other States that supported it from the outset, such as the members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement, including States from Africa, Asia and Latin America and the

Caribbean. We would also like to thank the European Union, including the Irish presidency, for its cooperation during the rather difficult negotiating process.

Today's resolution is undoubtedly an extremely important one. It reaffirms basic issues, including the status of the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, as territory under military occupation. It also reaffirms that the Palestinian people have the right to self-determination and to exercise sovereignty over their territory. The resolution also affirms that Israel, the occupying Power, must comply with its duties and obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention and the Fourth Hague Convention.

Those are all very important matters that pertain to the core of the conflict and to the foundation of rights of our people. All of those matters are non-negotiable, in the same way that the existence of Israel is non-negotiable. What is negotiable is the process that will lead to the establishment of two viable, independent and sovereign States — Israel and Palestine — based upon the pre-1967 borders.

What transpired today is of great importance, particularly because it occurred with such an overwhelming majority reflecting the position of nearly the entire international community. Most notably, it took place after grave negative developments that — had it not been for the efforts of the international community — could have destroyed the entire peace process.

I will spare the Assembly any reply to the last intervention by the Israeli representative, since such a reply would take quite a long time, and also because it is a hopeless issue. The representative of Israel is incapable of understanding that the problem does not lie with the international community; the problem lies in Israeli policies and measures against the Palestinian people. He is incapable of understanding that the General Assembly is not against Israel. On the contrary, the Assembly created Israel and is the same organ that adopted resolution 181 (II), on the partition of Palestine. But the General Assembly adheres to international law and supports the rights of the Palestinian people that the Israeli representative denies. In any event, this is the international community; we must learn to respect its will.

In that context, I would like to refer to the total isolation of the Israeli-American position. But I fully understand that the objective is not to achieve such isolation, but rather to change erroneous positions and to move towards a consensus that would bring about just, lasting and comprehensive peace and security in the Middle East.

The Palestinian people are grateful to you, Mr. President, for the letter of assurances and guarantees that you sent to them today.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 38.

The meeting rose at 4.20 p.m.

United Nations A/58/PV.88

General Assembly
Fifty-eighth session

Official Records

88th plenary meeting
Monday, 24 May 2004, 10 a.m.
New York

President: The Hon. Julian-R. Hunte ..... (Saint Lucia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Kirn (Slovenia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m

Agenda item 124 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations

The Acting President: I should like to draw the attention of the General Assembly to document A/58/688/Add.8, in which the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that, since the issuance of his communications contained in documents A/58/688 and Add.1 to Add.7, Suriname has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of the information contained in that document?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

Fourth report of the General Committee (A/58/250/Add.3)

Note by the Secretary-General (A/58/239)

The Acting President: In the first paragraph of the report contained in document A/58/250/Add.3, the General Committee recommends to the General Assembly that an additional item entitled "International Year of Physics, 2005" be included in the agenda of the current session.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to include this additional item in the agenda of the current session?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: The General Committee further recommends that the additional item be considered directly in plenary meeting.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to consider this item directly in plenary meeting?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: I should like to inform members that the item entitled "International Year of Physics, 2005" becomes item 169 on the agenda of the current session.

In paragraph 2 of the same document, the General Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly that an additional sub-item, entitled "Appointment of a member of the International Civil Service Commission", be included as a sub-item of agenda item 17, "Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments".

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

04-36085 (E)

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to include this additional sub-item as a sub-item of agenda item 17 in the agenda of the current session?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: The General Committee further decided to recommend to the General Assembly that the additional sub-item be allocated to the Fifth Committee.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to allocate this sub-item to the Fifth Committee?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: I should like to inform members that the new sub-item becomes sub-item (j) of agenda item 17 on the agenda of the current session.

The General Assembly will now take up a request submitted by the Secretary-General in document A/58/239. As indicated in his note, the Secretary-General has the honour to request, pursuant to rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the inclusion in the agenda of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly of an additional item entitled "Financing of the United Nations Operation in Burundi".

In view of the urgency of this request, and unless there is an objection, may I take it that the General Assembly agrees that the relevant provision of rule 40 of the rules of procedure, which would require a meeting of the General Committee on the question of the inclusion of this item on the agenda, could be waived?

I see no objection.

It was so decided.

The Acting President: May I take it that the General Assembly, on the proposal of the Secretary-General, wishes to include in the agenda of the current session an additional item entitled "Financing of the United Nations Operation in Burundi"?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: This item is therefore included as item 170.

In his note, the Secretary-General further requests that the item be allocated to the Fifth Committee. May I take it that the General Assembly, as requested by the Secretary-General, wishes to allocate this item to the Fifth Committee?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: The Chairman of the Fifth Committee will be informed of the decisions just taken by the General Assembly.

The meeting rose at 10.15 a.m.